
AM-TIX!
A NEWSFIELD PUBLICATION
No.7 May 1986
£1
MONTHLY SOFTWARE REVIEW FOR THE
AMSTRAD COMPUT
OF HEROES AND MONSTERS...
INFOCOM Interviewed
Journey back in time to Castle Avars and help Isvar, and The Edge, save
FAIRLIGHT
COMPETITION PRIZES GALORE!!
Win a £1,000 Go Kart, a racing bicycle, a computer and your own Lewis Chess Set plus loads more goodies
SHADOWFIRE MOONCRESTA
NICK FALDO'S GOLF
TOMAHAWK
FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD
Previews

DURELL

COMBAT LYNX (Air-to-ground Battle Simulation)

Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95
BBC/Electron	£8.95

"Combat Lynx is both simulation and shoot-em-up games in one. The 3D effect created by using contour line graphics tends to give it a more technical feel, so more like a simulation, but on the other hand there are lots of jets and enemy helicopters whizzing around and ground forces shooting at you which gives the game its instant playability appeal. Once you get the hang of coping with everything, it's possible to play a game of high strategy which involves not only arcade skills but those of forward planning. For people who enjoy strategy type games, Combat Lynx should provide hours of fun, while for those who prefer something instant and fast - choose skill level 4 and hang onto your hats! Generally the graphics are most impressive, with a few attribute problems when objects are about to become hidden, but these are minor in what is otherwise an engaging and challenging game."

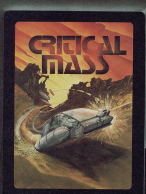
TURBO ESPRIT (3D Simulation Car Chase)

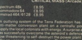
Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95

You are a special agent equipped with a Lotus Turbo Esprit. An international ring of drug smugglers are about to make a huge delivery of heroin, and must be stopped at all costs. The drugs are stored at a number of houses in the city, and will be taken by cars to an armoured van which will be cruising around the centre. A raid on the van before completion of the delivery would leave some of the drugs in circulation. Similarly a raid on any of the houses would alert them to your squad's activities. You must therefore try and pick-off the cars one by one before they make their drop, and then try to stop the van before it escapes. The delivery cars will be backed-up by 'hit' squads - so watch out!

(Developed with the support of Lotus Cars Ltd)





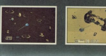


CRITICAL MASS (Arcade)

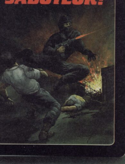
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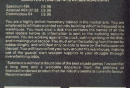
An outlying system of the Terra Federation has set up an advanced anti-matter conversion plant on a centrally positioned asteroid to supply the local colonists with energy. A surprise attack by alien forces has successfully overcome the asteroid's defences and the aliens are now threatening to self-destruct the power plant unless the colonists offer an unconditional surrender. The self-destruction process would effectively turn the power plant into a massive black hole that would wipe out the entire planetary system along with a number of nearby stars. Unconditional surrender offers an equally horrific prospect. Your mission is to infiltrate the enemy position and disable the anti-matter plant before the aliens achieve CRITICAL MASS.

"This is the biz!......The graphics and playability of this game are superb, making it well worth the money."









SABOTEUR (Martial Arts Arcade Adventure)

Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95

You are a highly skilled mercenary trained in the martial arts. You are employed to infiltrate a central security building which is disguised as a warehouse. You must steal a disk that contains the names of all the rebel leaders before its information is sent to the outlying security stations. You are working against the clock, both in getting to the disk, and in making your escape. You must enter the building from the sea by rubber dinghy, and will then only be able to leave by the helicopter on the roof. You will have to find your way around the warehouse, making use of the guards' own weapon supplies in your struggle through overwhelming odds.

"Saboteur is without a doubt one of the best arcade games I've seen for a long time and a welcome departure from the plethora of licenced/endorsed product that the industry seems to currently favour. Recommended."





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software getting harder . . . .



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Take to the skies as you play the part of our intrepid hero "BOMBJACK", the man without fear, as he indulges his incurable hobby of Bomb collecting.
"BOMBJACK" is the only game that will take you around the world from Greece to Egypt, sunsoaked beaches to the skies of New York City, but don't expect a holiday in this game. Danger threatens from every side in the form of deadly robots, rogue satellites and even killer-sparrows!
Your only chance is to eat the power pill which drains your enemies of power and leaves them easy prey to "BOMBJACK". But look out the pills effects won't last forever, unlike "BOMBJACK'S" strange urge for collecting Bombs.
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The officially licenced home version of the smash hit No.1 coin-op classic. You play the part of "Super Joe" crack combat soldier fighting a lone battle against overwhelming odds. All the action and tension of the U.K. Christmas No.1 available for your Amstrad NOW!
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Contributing Writers Graeme Kidd, Chris Honey, Roy Jones, Ben Stone
Production Matthew Uffindell, Gordon Druce, Tony Lorton
Advertisement Manager Roger Bennett
Subscriptions Denise Roberts
Mail Order Carol Kinsey

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A NEWSFIELD PUBLICATION
Cover by Oliver Frey

ISSUE 7 MAY 1986

MAY SPECIALS

THE MAIN HEADINGS

TOP GAMES MAY

AMTIX! COMPETITIONS

The next issue of AMTIX! goes on sale from the 15th May, the day to clamour at your local newsagent.

AMTIX!

POST MORTEM ON MANCHESTER SHOW . . .

Many thousands of people attended the first two day Amstrad Computer Show at Manchester and many of them must have gone away disappointed that so few software companies bothered to attend. A few did make the effort and for that a pat on the back goes to **Design Design**, **Mikro-Gen**, and **Incentive**. To the rest, sadly, must go a raspberry because they appear only too content to sit back in their ivory towers. They must remember that, without the support of Amstrad owners who buy their games, they would be out of business. They must make the effort to have a presence at future shows. At the end of the day it's in their own interest to do so!

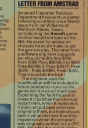
. . . MORE SPACE AND DAYS FOR NEXT ONE

The ever growing ownership of Amstrad computers in Britain is much in evidence and the most recent pointer is the fact the organisers of the computer shows have had to change the dates for the next event at the Novotel in London and also extend it to a three day exhibition instead of the original idea of a two day one. Originally the event was planned for May 31 and June 1 but now it will be taking place on Friday, June 13, Saturday, June 14; and Sunday, June 15.

A spokesman for the organising company said there had been an 'overwhelming demand' from would-be exhibitors and as a result the available floor space was being doubled with two floors at the Hammersmith hotel being given over to standholders. At the same time it was planned to hold a series of walk-in forums for the first time. The idea is to enable visitors to listen to and talk to some of the United Kingdom's leading experts on the Amstrad.

'Hopefully this time we shall not find ourselves with the situation where we have to turn leading companies away because of being over subscribed. The demand for stands reflects the boom in products for the Amstrad. More and more hardware and software houses are giving up established lines and moving into the Amstrad market which they see as an ever-growing source of their future profits.'





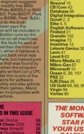
LETTER FROM AMSTRAD

Amstrad Customer Services Department have sent us a letter following an article in our March issue from Ian Williams of Waltham Abbey, Essex, complaining the **Amsoft** game *Amfoot* would not load on his 664. He asked for advice on changes he could make to get the game to play. The letter from a software engineer suggests Ian should modify line 9000 from 9000 Poke &9009,0 to 9000 Poke &9009,0: Poke &937F, Peek (&39) ; Poke &9380, Peek (&3A). That should do the trick!

The engineer says the modification will be included in future production runs so the game will run on all machines. Explaining the fault he said at present it patches the interrupt restart then, when it replaces it, it does not put back what was originally there, but instead puts back a value that was found by inspection when the program was originally written (on a CPC 464). He adds this is one of the classic reasons for software incompatibility and also admits another of their games, *Manic Miner* is also incompatible with the V1.1 machine.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

GEC Communications have written to AMTIX! with reference to an advertisement by **Modem House** making reference to them and to an 'approval' for use with British Telecommunications Systems. The company asks to be allowed to put it on record that the *Voyager* range of modems referred to in the advertisement are not **GEC** products and they object to the use of the 'approval statement' and to their name being used in conjunction with *Voyager* modems.



ADVERTISERS' INDEX



SOFTWARE REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE

THE MONTHLY SOFTWARE STAR FOR YOUR US GOLD CALENDAR






AIR COMBAT
YESTERDAY..
Spitfire
40
Rev up your engine and take to the skies to save your country. Hunt down the enemy and build up your log of kills as you rise through the ranks to the elite of the RAF.
A Crash! Smash
Amstrad CPC £9.95
Commodore 64 £9.95 tape, £14.95 disk
Spectrum 48K/128K £9.95
Features special extended 128K version of the program with a mission to complete, extra sound, and more ground detail.
...and TODAY
STRIKE FORCE HARRIER
Plot your course to the enemy HQ at the controls of your full-function V/STOL Harrier, protecting yourself and your ground sites with cannon, bombs, and Sidewinder missiles.
"A classy, polished, and highly addictive simulation"
– Computer & Video Games
BBC/Electron £9.95 tape, £12.95 BBC disk
Amstrad CPC £9.95 tape, £14.95 disk
Commodore and Spectrum versions coming soon
DOMINATE THE SKIES WITH
MIRRORSOFT
Purnell Book Centre, Paulton, Bristol BS18 5LQ



ANDY'S INVENTED A GAME

Dear Spot,
Before I start, I would just like to say how brilliant your magazine is and that I have got every single issue. I hope you will publish my picture. I bet your wondering why it's called *Andy in for fitness* well it's an idea for a game.

Andy is a weed and that means he has trouble getting the girls, while Jimmy the hunk is overwhelmed by girls. Now this is making Andy a little bit sick so he decides to train himself up on weights and starts to compete against Jimmy, but things are not as easy as you think.

The game is a sort of a walkabout one where Andy has to walk around the town avoiding Mum because she always asks Andy to look after the baby. If Andy refuses his Dad comes after him with the slipper so it's best to push the baby around for five minutes, but with the baby you have to avoid your intended girlfriend. (Well you can understand the shame) Andy also has to avoid Jimmy's mate, Kirk, because it always ends in a fight.

Andy can fight by pressing O/P for left and right punching, if Andy loses the fight he will lose a life, he will also lose a life if he meets his dad and his intended. But that's not it. He takes part in a boxing competition, 100 metres sprint and the 100 metres swimming event. There's also the fairground. When you enter the fairground you are given a pound, the rides are tempting so his money tends to go quickly. This also ends up with his dad coming after him.

You may think how do you win at this game? Well Andy has to win all the tournaments, win the admiration of his girlfriend and generally be a good lad. You can wake up now! I would just like to ask you what you think of it and would it look good on the Amstrad. So if there's any budding programmer without a thought in his mind this should be the game for him.
Andy Mack, Coventry

Sounds like the hit of the century. Why not team up with a programmer fellow and produce it? We'll review it if it ever comes together. Still, as you're obviously an enterprising sort of fellow, we've decided to award you star status this month, Andy, so pick out your £20 worth of software immediately and let Auntie Aggie know!
OTS

MORE GAMES REVIEWS PLEASE

Dear AMTIX!
Straight to the point. You are not reviewing enough Amstrad games! Issue one was packed with games and was FAB. But in recent issues only a FEW reviews have been done.

Still, you're an alright magazine but try and keep up 'The complete games index' (WE WANT LOADS OF GAMES)!
Bob, Woodlands Avenue, Wanstead, London

Thanks for your letter Bob. We would like to see lots more game reviews in AMTIX! too but we can only review and preview what the software companies send us. If they send us the goods we shall do the rest. Still, feast your eyes on some of the previews this issue — and don't forget to take a look at the new ERE game on the first news page!
OTS

MARSPORT WILL NOT LOAD!

Dear OTS,
I need HELP. I bought *Marsport* about 2 months ago. I tried loading but it would not. I played around with the volume. It worked, No it didn't, when I left the menu I found the top half of the screw was missing. I have tried EVERYTHING! I can think of but no luck. CAN YOU HELP?
Keith Lawrence, Billingham, Cleveland

Yes. Go to shop of original purchase. Say 'Excuse me Mr/Mrs shop assistant, I bought this game and it doesn't load. Give me a new one please'. Beetle home with new copy and try it out — your original definitely sounds faulty.
OTS

HOW TO IMPROVE AMTIX! RATINGS?

Dear OTS,
Congrats on being the equal best mag around. Sorry to say this, but a certain magazine ranks equally among my 'top spots' of each month. Really, this applies to the other (nameless) Amstrad mag as well, but to voice my opinions, to be fair, writing to you is my credit to you.

Well done with the colour/monochrome page mixing and the advert spacing. This is done better than another Amstrad mag (innocent whistle). Mega-brillo on competitions. You should find enclosed my entries to NINE of your Xmas/New Year comps, excellent reviews — great ideas, those large picture blow ups.

Amtips — not so hot, Candy seems to have lost all his PAZAZZ (sorry) to his hairstyle. Get Aggie to swap places, Candy's got a perfect image for subscription queen and surely Aggie looks better than him? (PS Where did his 'fuzzy' picture go)?

Well done for making *Barry McGuigan* an Accolade. It should reach the uppercut in the charts, deals a body blow to other sports simulations and any straddles owner who misses it should feel right cross!! **Activision** have hooked a right one here!!
Value for money; good. Bit slim, February — why two covers? Surely that's a dirty trick to make the mag look thicker? (Tut tut, slap wrist). Get together a 'player challenge' section — where a bragger gets to come in and be humiliated. Or knock a hole in the AMTIX! electrical kitty! Do more free posters (NOT the pull-out kind!) and, talking of pull-outs, get your centre pages fixed! mine always fall out after a couple of reads!

These suggestions would boost your ratings to: Graphics: 96% decent illustrations, Oli: more colour? (creep, crawl)
Sound: 88% special FX from AMTIX! Towers!
Readability: 97%, assassinate Candy, give OTS more room.
Lastability: 98% apart from the centre pages, the mag reads well again and again.
Value for money: 91% several points could be improved. Do more free gifts, better subscription and general offers, and competitions (but that's pushing it a bit!).
Overall: 98%
Ashley Cotter-Cairns, Hemel Hempstead, Herts

You're getting AMTIX! and CRASH mixed up, Ashley! Candy only had a fuzzy picture in CRASH — he wouldn't allow one in AMTIX!

The February cover wasn't in two, you idiot, it was the same image, but if you bought it twice over, thank you! All your suggestions have been suitably filed, and if we ever have time to get round to any of them, you'll find out about it!
OTS

IS THERE A BUG IN LORD OF THE RINGS?

Dear AMTIX!
I think the mag is brilliant! I bought the first issue, thought it was great, and I've bought every issue since. The reason for my letter is that I am looking for some advice, recently I bought a copy of **Melbourne House**'s new adventure *Lord of the Rings*, (In fact I bought it over a month ago now), I rushed home, loaded it into my computer and started playing it immediately. As I was playing I thought 'Wow this game is great!' And indeed it was excellent.

I wondered around for a while with my friends, Pippin and Sam, until at last we arrived at a little house in Crickhollow on the western bank of the Brandywine river where we met Merry. From the house my followers and I ventured 'E'ast through a door in the house, the next location was the entrance to a tunnel in a hedge, so from there I entered the tunnel by typing 'E' that was all very well, my friends followed me, the computer described my surroundings including an exit to the EAST, (down the tunnel). So again I typed the command 'E'ast but this time the reply was:- 'You try to go east but 7.' And the computer crashed, so I am convinced it is a bug.

I have already written a letter to **Melbourne House** at the beginning of January, but up to now I have not received any reply. So I was wondering if you could help in any way. As you will appreciate it is very frustrating to have such a promising adventure game and not be able to complete it because of a silly little insect. I wait hopefully to read your reply in a future issue of AMTIX!
Simon Clegg, Heaton Norris, Stockport

With a game as complex as *Lord of the Rings* there are bound to be a few bugs lying around, although Leprechaun Masterson says he hasn't come across any yet.
OTS

DRAGONTORC DILEMMA

Dear AMTIX!
I'm about to stick up for you so you had better appreciate it. It concerns a letter sent to you by Shafqat Rasul. He thinks that you are biased towards Amsoft, well if he had read the official Amstrad publication, issue 13, he would have seen *3D Grand Prix* beat *Highway Encounter* and *The Covenant*. Strange isn't it?

It might be my copy but *Sweevo's World* had its accolade bit missing as did *Elite*, they both scored 94. Now for the real problem: In *Dragontorc* where does the servant sprite appear? It may be that I am still only in control of the astral figure. PLEASE help.
Phil, Moseley, Birmingham

It's funny how opinions differ, isn't it! As to your *Dragontorc* problems, Robin Candy has done a complete solution (finishes this issue), but the Servant spell is one you have at the start of the game — what have you done to upset yours?
OTS

EVERYONE MAKES MISTAKES DON'T THEY?

Dear OTS
I am writing this letter because I have still not received my Chrissy pressy of a brand new, gleaming 6128. This is because the shops can't seem to lay their grubby hands on one for me. I would like to know where Mr Sugar is hiding them.

I thought AMTIX! was a real brill mag, when I first bought it. Then I found the mistake on pages 96-97 of issue 1 (already mentioned by someone else, I know, the competition minion who wrote it should be shot). The next obvious mistake on your behalf is in issue 4 on page 20, you got the screen shot from *TLL* upside down! (I think). Apart from these minor errors AMTIX! is absolutely BRILLO-PAD. After all no-one's perfect (even I make mistakes occasionally).

Just one valid complaint can be made about the mag. and that is: Why does the AMTECH section assume that everyone who reads the magazine is a 'techno whizz kid', because I am not. Spare a thought for us lesser mortals.
Sam Meldrum, Amersham Road, Beaconsfield, Bucks.
PS Which game received 'TACKIEST GAME OF THE YEAR AWARD'? PPS Where are the binders? PPPS If I win the £20 worth of software I would like *Discovery* by **Siren Software** on disk £11.99 and *Sweevo's World* by **Gargoyle Games** on cassette £7.95

Yes we already know about those errors. Mind you it might be an idea to start a competition to spot this month's deliberate mistake. Our new editor, Malcolm Harding, would also like to see the Amtech section less 'techno wizzo' too. *Assault on Port Stanley* won the 'tackiest game of year' award as you would know if you read last month's issue of AMTIX! Binders are now available (see page 43 of the April issue).
OTS

ON ALL AMSTRADS STATE IF GAMES LOAD

Dear AMTIX!
After the letter by Mr Keith Jenkins, asking for you to mention which games will load onto which computer at the top of your reviews, and you replying that you would, why then did only a few of the reviews have this piece of information? For instance *Elite*, *Sweevo's World*, *Doors of Doom*, etc, etc did not have any information at all saying which computer they will load into.

Why? As a 6128 owner it would be a great help, as I'm sure many would agree, if you could just use a few words in print and tell us which games we can buy. Please.
Edward Colville, Bath, Avon.

Your comments about printing if a particular game is compatible for just the 464 or indeed the 464, 664 and 6128 has been passed on to our Software Editor, Robin Candy, for due consideration.
OTS

EXPLODING FIST IS 6128 COMPATIBLE

Dear OTS
I am writing to, hopefully, stop this problem of compatibility with the 6128. You've had several letters about *Way of the Exploding Fist*, saying it will not load on the 6128. I personally never, ever had any problems with it. I've spent hours trying to load *Nonterraqueous*, but it loads!

Also you say disk based programs cost more as people 'slap' on profits. What I don't understand is why do all disk programs cost £13.95, when the tape prices varies from £7.95 to £9.95?

Finally people say Amstrads are expensive computers. I wish these rumours would stop. Some technical whizz person couldn't make just the computer, let alone the tape/disk drive and monitor, for Amstrad's price. But what about the Spectrum? The original price was around £200, and it only costs £15.00 to make!

So before you make allegations, make sure they are well backed. Lastly, can Mr Frey give us pictures of 6128s as well as 664s and 464s. By the way in issue 4 you say you haven't heard of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell (See AMTIPS). Well you shouldn't have! It's on Planet 'X', which people aren't sure even exists!
G Ross, Benson, Oxford.

Not all disk-based games are £13.95 you know, and profit isn't solely the reason for higher prices on disk games — they also sell less quantities of them, which tends to make them more expensive per unit because of marketing costs.
OTS

HAVE I BEEN RIPPED OFF?

Dear Sir,
In the February edition of your magazine AMTIX! you review the game, *Sweevo's World*, and state that it costs £7.95. You also carry a full page advert which also states the price is £7.95.

Last week I purchased one of these games for my son and had to pay £9.95. On querying this I was told that was the price on their invoice.

Could you please look into this for me and let me know why I have to pay £9.95 for a game you quite clearly state as costing £7.95?
Mrs J Burgess, Braintree, Essex

Yes, it appears you have been misled, Mrs Burgess. The price of the game is £7.95. It would seem the shop either looked at the wrong invoice, or their distributor made a mistake. Take it up with the shop or write to Gargoyle Games at 74 King Street, Dudley, West Midlands.
OTS

GREAT BUT STILL ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

Dear AMTIX!
You make a brilliant magazine for a brilliant computer, making a good trio CRASH, ZZAP!, and this, but I have a few queries. First, in issue 4 you had an article that said The Amstrad was without *Nodes of Yesod*, yet in issue 2, the advert for this game at the bottom says Spectrum, — Commodore 64 — AMSTRAD — etc etc.

I have played this game and it is extremely good so either you or **Odin** have 'boobed'. Secondly why does AMTIX! only come out on around the 12th to 17th while CRASH and ZZAP! are released on or about the 8th, 9th, 10th?

The colour in your mag is very good, but can we have a bit more? It shows the games graphics much better than boring black and white. Also DON'T put listings, they only equal havoc. I'd also like to congratulate Oliver Frey on his marvellous art work for 3 mags plus extra bits and bobs.

When you put competitions, please judge, and reveal winners a bit quicker, the prize is new when the competition is started, but after 3 months it soon gets old. You still produce an excellent mag.
K Leong, Lancashire.

Our production facilities make it impossible to produce all three mags at the same time, and it would also cause distribution havoc, so they have to stagger. Still, you seem to have your dates a bit confused — ZZAP! is the first out, on the 2nd Thursday of a month, AMTIX! on the next Thursday, and CRASH at the end, on the last Thursday. We do try and include as much colour as possible, but the cost of colour over mono is something to the tune of ten times! As to the comps, you must remember that the mag containing one is out for a month, but it's judged a month later, thus missing the following issue for results, so a two month gap is the best we can do — sorry about that!
OTS

KIDDY GAMES WANTED

Dear AMTIX!
I was pleased to read your November and January issues. We have 2 junior enthusiasts in the family — a 6 year old and a 4 year old. We would be pleased to see reviews of software for children.

Our current favourites are **Mirrorsoft**'s *First Steps* and *Here and There*. But the children would like some games to play, not just educational programs.
Jennifer Frost, P.O. Box 226, Mendi, SHP, Papua New Guinea.

Our Educational feature is a regular spot, but if it's games you are looking out for, there are many in the normal section that are suitable, and we will usually say if they are aimed more at the younger player.
OTS



SHAFQAT STRIKES BACK AGAIN!

Dear AMTIX!
Being the author of the letter Mr Mendes was referring to in issue 5 I think I ought to get a few points straightened out.

Point 1: His remark 'he reads all the interesting magazines before popping them through your letterbox' is a little bit off course because I happen to be a cashier, that means I don't deliver magazines. Anyway I subscribe to 2/3 of the interesting magazines. So Mr Mendes kindly check your facts before opening your mouth and letting your belly rumble. (I had better not mention the names of the magazines in case AMTIX! gives them a full page spread).

Point 2: OK there may have been a demand for a race game last Christmas but that doesn't mean you should hit us with a half finished game. I mean with the potential of the Amstrad Micro al you could offer was *3D-Grand Prix*. What happens when you complete the game? Do you just throw it away because some PRATT called Mendes forgot to add a design your own track feature. I believe there must be at least 29,999 people (excluding PRATT) who will agree *3D-Grand Prix* falls flat due to this deficiency. The very least Mr Mendes could have done was add the option to load extra tracks from tape/disk.

Point 3: Mr Mendes seems to have a problem with his nose — it seems to be running all the time. I asked a friend called Ian Hutchinson about this problem on behalf of Mr Mendes (Ian's a nose it all). Anyway he suggests Mr Mindless invests in a snot rag. In fact I know of the appropriate and ideal thing — the inlay for *3D-Grand Prix*!

Point 4: As for brainless use of words, for example Fat Rat, Shaftrat, pirateshrat etc, has he ever seriously thought of taking up poetry writing for a living? I'm sure he would be much better at that than he is at writing software!!

Point 5: No Mr Mendes I haven't got any artwork but if you stick it in a jiffy bag I might even review it for you and send the results in to AMTIX! All the extra publicity and advertising should work wonders for the sales . . .

Finally Mr Benders you told me not to waste trees by writing letters. This prompted me to have a look at other letters in issue five and I am glad to say your letter was not wasted. How can I phrase this without being to indelicate? Let's just say I used it to wipe something and it was not my nose!

It's no wonder *Gatecrasher* isn't selling (I have not got that either). I believe this will continue to happen if you keep churning out what are in my opinion half finished games.
Shafqat Rasal, Alloa, Scotland

Tish, tish. Now if you boys would like to shake hands I think we could all be really good friends.
OTS

WHERE IS THE MYSTERIOUS FAN?

Dear AMTIX!
Last Christmas I bought a copy of that great game, *Yie Ar Kung Fu*, which I think is one of the best games for the Amstrad for ages, but reading the Amtips section in issue 5 of AMTIX! I found out that my game has one opponent missing, Fan, so I wondered whether I could do anything about it.
Daniel Snook, Littleborough, Lancs.

Gosh, sounds terrible. Never fear though, here's our heroic and very famous personality Robin Candy to explain. Take it away Rob . . .

It seems that the person who sent in the tips for Yie Ar Kung Fu wanted to be ahead of the crowd and sent in tips for the arcade machine original. Unfortunately Imagine ran out of memory when programming the game and Fan just had to go.
RC
OTS

IS THERE A BUG IN ELITE?

Dear Amtix!
I would like to know if the rumour about *Elite* having a bug in it is true? Is it also true they have been withdrawn from shops and people are being asked to return their games to the shop where it was purchased? I was told this by one dealer but when I asked another one he said it was a lie.

Now I do not know what to believe and I intend to buy *Elite* so I am asking you to tell the truth.

Also can you send me a list of games that can be bought through AMTIX! and tell me how long it takes for the software to be dispatched? Most shops around here do not stock many games and when you ask for one which is not in stock it can take up to two months for it to be ordered. Hoping to hear from you soon.
Melvyn Haseldine, Milton Keynes.

Yes the *Elite* bug is true, but it has now been rectified. All games can be bought through AMTIX mail order — just send your requirements and Auntie Aggie will do her best to comply.
OTS

MY AMSTRAD AND SYNTHESISER WANT TO MATE

Dear OTS,
I have recently purchased an Amstrad CPC 6128 and I am very satisfied with it. After purchasing my new Amstrad (I previously had a Spectrum) I made an intense search to find a good magazine which would have been up to the standard of my new computer and AMTIX! came out the best. Well let's get to the point!

As I am keen on music I bought a small synthesiser which has got 22 sounds with which you can play. This synch is a Casio Tone MT-41 and I am writing to ask you to enquire whether there is an add-on with which I can connect my Amstrad to my synth so I can produce more and better sounds on my synth using the Amstrad. Thank you for your fantastic magazine and keep up the good work.
Lincoln Spiteri, Nottary Zarb str, Attard, Malta.

I think a MIDI interface is being produced at this very moment in time. If you wait patiently I'm sure you'll be informed courtesy of the jolly decent news pages service, or via a review in good time.
OTS

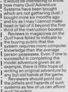
PUT ANSWERS ON RESULTS PAGE

Dear AMTIX!
First of all why don't you put the answers in the results page? That would save you looking down the winners list if you got the answers wrong. Secondly get your reviews done quicker. *Amstrad Action* (excuse the language) reviewed *Hypersports* in their Christmas special. You reviewed it in March! I know that Ludlow is supposed to be a sleepy village. but three months behind?

Well at least you haven't got that stupid shoot the toot thingy. Could you please say hello to the highly acclaimed ASOC (Amstrad Spectrum Owners Club), alias me and David Stubbings. We don't have any club meetings etc. We just do it to annoy TOBY (I've got stupid hair) HOGG (we won't let him join). This won't get letter of the month because it doesn't tell you what a brilliant mag you are. and it isn't long enough. So farewell. Goodbye and other such phrases.
Justin Mason (additional material by FLASH my cat), Shanklin, Isle of Wight.

We can only review games as and when we receive them. Perhaps Imagine should receive a well aimed kick for not sending the game to us sooner. Also, take into account the difference in publication dates — it means sometimes we get things first, and sometimes they get things first. Not all the comps need an answer, but where it's sensible, we'll try and get comps minion to do it, okay?
OTS

THE QUILL IS ABOVE ME



Dear Gentlemen,
It would be interesting to know how many *Quill* Adventure Systems have been bought which are not gathering dust. I bought mine six months ago and try as I may I cannot make head or tail of it beyond the first third of the instruction booklet.

Reviews in magazines on the *Quill* have failed to indicate to the buying public that the system requires more computer knowledge than the average person possesses. Even if one is successful in completing the model adventure given as an example, there is little hope of writing an original adventure by any but old hands at the game.

Reviewers should point out the pitfalls and hazards of such systems as few of us can afford such blunders.
Robert Lamb, Cottingham, E Yorkshire



In fact we have never reviewed *The Quill* since it arrived on the Amstrad before AMTIX! was launched. However, countless thousands of *Quill* owners on several machines, have been happily using the system for almost two years. Our very own Roger Kean has written two shortish (40-50 rooms) games with it, and he says the instructions are reasonably clear. he also denies that nay specialised knowledge of computing is necessary with the sole exception of the 'flags', and even here a spot of logical thinking will sort them out as well.
OTS

MOANS AND GROANS TIME

Dear Sir,
Firstly I would like to point out that Robin Hood was not a peasant as you indicate in your preview of *Robin of the Wood*. He had indeed, to anyone who knows anything about the legend, a title (the Earl of Loxley or something like that), and he rebelled against the wicked King John as he was a supporter of Richard the Lionheart, so he gave up his home to fight with the people. I know this is just a small mistake on your behalf, and I might have got a little bit carried away but still this sort of slip up is very annoying!

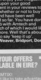
My last grumble is to do with the large numbers of printing errors which keep cropping up. I would like to ask if you use a spelling checker? I think you do as most of these mistakes are proper words, but the wrong ones in the wrong places. Surely a quick read through could stop many of these? Having said all this I still enjoy your magazine.

I rely upon your good judgement in your reviews to decide whether or not to buy a game and have been well satisfied so far. You have done a good job with Amtech and Lettertech of which I would like to see more. Well that's about it, except to say 'keep it up'.
Simon Weaver, Bridport, Dorset

In fact you are wrong about Robin Hood — there are, and always have been — two legends concerning him, one that he was a minor Saxon noble embattled against the Norman oppressors, the other that he was a Saxon peasant.

Yes, it's true that spellcheckers can be more of a pain than a boon, especially in contextual problems or the mistyping of words like 'YOU' or 'YOUR'. All copy is checked visually on screen of course, just as a manuscript would be, but with some 65,000 words a month (mostly input over a one and a half week period) there are going to be errors — just look at your daily newspaper!
OTS

LESS ARTY COMPETITIONS PLEASE



Dear AMTIX!
I have a complaint to make (shock, horror) about your magazine. It concerns the competitions you do - they're great especially the prizes, but why are so many to do with art. It's alright for people like Richard Bocock (my mate) but for our lives it's unfair.

For example in January's edition only one competition had nothing to do with drawing. Oh, by the way, your magazine is great (I was told you don't get anything printed unless you creep a bit), although I do read *Amstrad Action* as well (oh dear — now it will never be letter of the month).
Richard Couchman, St Ives, Cambridgeshire.

Our competition minion is an arty (or is it artful) character and tends to exude arty ideas for the competitions. The editor intends to try and stem his artistic bent somewhat so that non-arty persons like your good self have more of a chance. *Amstrad what* was it you also read? Tut tut.
OTS

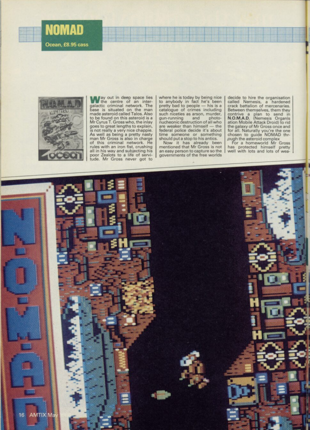
ARE YOUR OFFERS AVAILABLE IN EIRE?

Dear AMTIX!
I would like to take advantage of your great offers but I live in Eire and I believe this makes it impossible for me to take advantage of them. I cannot see why the Republic of Ireland can not be included in this offer. After all it is available in Northern Ireland. It is not a very big island and there can not be any great difficulty with the postal system.

I would be willing to pay the extra sterling as our pound is worth less than yours. There are many Amstrad users in Ireland who would like to avail themselves of your club and become members. I hope to get a favourable reply to my letter as it would mean a great deal to me.
Kieran Walsh, Douglas, County Cork, Ireland

We don't actually run a club as such, Kieran, but any offers are available to those living in Eire — it's just that the prices are different because of the currency exchange rates etc. We had a word with Aunty Aggie in Mail Order and all she asks is that you send payments in £ sterling.
OTS

That's it for this month. If you have anything to say to the On The Spot Team (ie, most of AMTIX!) write to ON THE SPOT, AMTIX! MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.



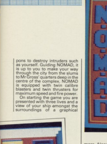
NOMAD

Ocean, £8.95 cass

Way out in deep space lies the centre of an intergalactic criminal network. The base is situated on the man made asteroid called Talos. Also to be found on this asteroid is a Mr Cyrus T. Gross who, the inlay goes to great lengths to explain, is not really a very nice chappie. As well as being a pretty nasty man Mr Gross is also in charge of this criminal network. He rules with an iron fist, crushing all in his way and subjecting his poor Zealots to a life of servitude. Mr Gross never got to where he is today by being nice to anybody in fact he's been pretty bad to people — his is a catalogue of crimes including such niceties as arson, murder, gun-running and photo-nucheonic destruction of all who are weaker than himself — the federal police decide it's about time someone or something should put a stop to his antics.

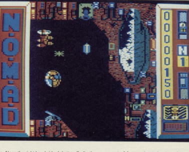
Now it has already been mentioned that Mr Gross is not an easy person to capture so the governments of the free worlds decide to hire the organisation called Nemesis, a hardened crack battalion of mercenaries. Between themselves, them they contrive a plan to send in **N.O.M.A.D.** (Nemesis Organisation Mobile Attack Droid) to rid the galaxy of Mr Gross once and for all. Naturally you're the one chosen to guide NOMAD through the asteroid complex

For a homeworld Mr Gross has protected himself pretty well with lots and lots of wea-

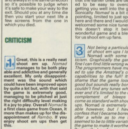


pons to destroy intruders such as yourself. Guiding NOMAD, it is up to you to make your way through the city from the slums to Mr Gross' quarters deep in the centre of the complex. NOMAD is equipped with twin calibre blasters and twin thrusters for maximum speed and fire power.

On starting the game you are presented with three lives and a view of your ship amongst the surroundings of a graphical maze. Along the right hand side of the screen appears your score. The maze itself is full of assorted nasties which are situated within the walls of the maze. These fire periodically and always in the same direction so it's possible to judge when it's safe to make your way to the exit. Should you at any time die then you start your next life a few screens from the one in which you died.







CRITICISM

1 **Great, this is a really neat shoot em up. *Nomad* manages to be both playable and addictive and generally excellent. My only disappointment was the sound which could have been improved upon by quite a lot but, with that said the game is extremely good, managing to be pitched at just the right difficulty level making it a joy to play. Overall *Nomad* is a first class game from Ocean, it more than makes up for the disappointment of *Rambo*. If you enjoy shoot em ups then get this.**

2 When I first loaded this I thought 'Oh no not another shoot em up' but I couldn't have been more wrong. For a start the graphics are terrific — in fact they are some of the best around, colour has been used to the full, leaving only some Virgin games looking better. Sadly the movement of your ship is a bit jerky but otherwise everything is fine. The playing content is wonderful with the screens getting progressively harder, which means that the earlier ones are designed to be easy to overcome, getting you well into the game. Sonically *Nomad* is a bit disappointing, limited to just spot FX here and there and I would have welcomed some nice tunes, but this doesn't stop it being a wonderful game and a blessing for us shoot em up fans.

3 *Not being a particular fan of shoot em ups I loaded* Nomad *with some scepticism. Graphically the game is fine I can find little wrong with it. The programmers have managed to use the Amstrad's colour capabilities to the full! It is a shame that the game looks so good but sounds really boring. I couldn't find any tunes whatsoever and it's limited to the usual complement of bleeps that come as standard with shoot em ups.* Nomad *is extremely playable however, but I have to confess that I became bored of it after a while as to me there seemed to be to little variation in the game to make it worthwhile. Personally I prefer games with more depth to them but I can appreciate why the other reviewers have liked* Nomad*, and if you're a shoot em up fan, then I would recommend it, otherwise try and buy something with more of a game in it.*

Presentation 86%
Ocean's usual slick presentation.

Graphics 93%
Colourful, detailed graphics only marred by the slight jerkiness of the ship's movement.

Sound 65%
Limited spot FX, a bit disappointing.

Playability 94%
Instantly playable.

Addictive qualities 89%
You just want to come back for more.

Value for money 91%
Slightly expensive but nevertheless excellent.

Overall 92%
Ocean have come up with another first class product.



FAIRLIGHT

The Edge, £9.95 cass

Along time ago in a land far, far away the place known only as Fairlight was a happy place. People would go about their business without a care in the world. Sadly today all that has changed, no longer does the sun shine on the Castle Avars. The decline of Fairlight was attributed to a succession of particularly bad rulers. Gradually through the years the Castle became the stuff out of which legends were made.

Then one day the happy go lucky Isvar decided to take a stroll through Ogri's Wood, greatly acclaimed since the amount of people who enter the wood is significantly larger than the number who leave it. Unfortunately for Isvar he is captured by Ogri and taken to her cave. Here, when he eventually resumed consciousness, he was greeted by an old man. This old man led him out of danger and to the Castle Avars. Here a mysterious door opened and Isvar found himself inside the castle. The old man then disappeared but before dematerialising he explained he was the King Avar's magician, imprisoned in the castle for thousands of years. As Isvar, this is where your task comes in, to find the Book of Light and free the Magician from his bondage only then will you be allowed to walk free from the castle.

At the start of the game you are equipped with just a sword to defend yourself against the castle's guards which still patrol the grounds thanks to some devilry. Also protecting the castle are other, more sinister, creatures. The world into which Isvar has been thrust is represented in true 3D. The difference between this and other 3D games is that the objects scattered around the castle behave as they would do in real life. For instance if you push a barrel it will not go as far as a stool simply because it's

LIFE
03



Not too many people will see this screen! Isvar finally meets the Wizard.

heavier. Isvar possesses five pockets in which to drop objects but sometimes you are only able to carry less because their combined weight may not permit Isvar to pick up anything else.

The floor of the castle is littered with many objects the purposes of which may not be immediately apparent but suffice to say that the problems have logical solutions especially if you remember that some objects are possessed of magical powers. When Isvar embarks on his mission he has 99 life points which gradually decrease as you bump him into the guards etc, of course food boosts your energy.

Each location in the castle grounds is colour coded so with a little practice it is easy to tell where you are but with that said *Fairlight* is far from easy to map.

CRITICISM

1 **Fairlight was one of the best games in 1985 for the Spectrum; now it has finally appeared on the Amstrad in a much improved form, will it achieve the same critical acclaim though? After a couple of hours playing *Fairlight* I can safely say that it is one of the best arcade adventures to grace the Amstrad. In fact words fail to describe its excellence. My only valid grumble is that it tends to slow down when there are quite a few things on screen. The graphics are great and coupled with the delightful colour it is a joy to look at. Overall I can recommend *Fairlight*, definitely one of the best games around.**

2 Of course the first thing that strikes you about *Fairlight* is the a superb graphics and colourful backgrounds. But there is more to it than just a pretty game — there's also great playability and amazing addictivity 'cos you are never far away from the next door when you die. I loved *Fairlight* and found it relatively fast considering they're shifting around tons of memory along side the superb animation of the little detailed figures, like guards and people that look like tree cutters from Canada. The feeling that *Fairlight* gives you is one of a creepy place from the past and it sets the scene beautifully with a very eery melody at the start of every game. *Fairlight* is certainly one for the adventure freaks but whether your average shoot em up person will like it is another matter completely.

3 *I've never seen Fairlight on other computer formats so playing it for the first time on the Amstrad was a whole new experience for me. The graphics are terrific, in fact as far as 3D goes these are the best. The animation of the guards and other characters is wonderful. Fairlight is full of nice but subtle touches that make for an excellent game — for instance the way the guards materialise before your eyes is marvellous. As to the game itself I found it a bit to slow moving for my tastes but on persevering and solving a few puzzles I must admit that it is a really great game. The biggest let down is probably the sound, it doesn't do the game justice at all. Fairlight is one of those games that you either love or hate but I think for the most of us it is the former.*

Presentation 92%
Great instructions and great packaging.

Graphics 96%
Detailed graphics which make good use of the Amstrad's palette.

Sound 79%
Nice tune on the menu screen. The game features adequate sound effects.

Playability 90%
Going around beating up the guards is fun let alone getting into the story itself.

Addictive qualities 95%
Once you're hooked you will find plenty to keep you playing.

Value for money 91%
At £9.95 maybe a touch expensive but worth it.

Overall 96%
Don't miss out on this first rate game.

2112 AD



Design Design, £7.95 cass, £14.95 disk

Watch out for the robotic RSPCA — when Poddy gets underfoot too much, you may be tempted to kick him.

CRITICISM

1 2112 AD contains some brilliant graphics with all moving characters beautifully animated. Movement around the place, however, is very slow and I felt this detracted from the game a great deal. 2112 AD is full of very strange puzzles and odd comments that pop up on your little display pad at the bottom of the screen. The game contains a few funny features like eating out of tin cans that lie around and getting comments back like 'rather tasty' or getting Poddy to bring the first aid case to you, but I wasn't really addicted to this game. I felt that it needed more sparkle —like sound, and an element too that needed some quick reactions, but I'm afraid it lacks in both departments. Unlike most Design Design games I didn't laugh a lot and was kept to busy wondering about where the little mutt would wander of to now. 2112 AD needs a lot of patience to play it and I think most Amstrad owners just won't spare the time.

2 *AD 2112* is an unusual icon-driven strategy game. Design Design has decided to make it awkward by the use of icons! But to be fair, it is one of the most interesting games I have seen Design Design put out in a long time and it provides a reasonable and different challenge. The colour is very good but in the end the game is let down by poor playability. Unfortunately they have let the antics of PODDY become programmed in and he really gets on your nerves so beware all ye who buy this! Overall an interesting game for your money but not necessarily what most strategists would want.

3 2112 AD is a pretty strategy game, really. It's got neat graphics, and the colour is lavish. I like it. I wouldn't say it's hyper-mega-ultra-fab, go out and get it now, but it is worth taking a look at. Its only reasonable value for money, but there's plenty to keep you occupied. The man moves very smoothly, though when you try to get somewhere in a hurry Poddy doesn't half get in the way! Yes, Design Design have come up with a nice product here, though in some respects I think they could have made it better.

In this wondrous year life as we know it is pretty different. Look at London in this bright new age — gone are the pigeons, people, taxis and tourists, it's all become one massive computing complex which controls the rest of the British Isles. It's all jolly and fun for the people who populate these fair Isles because robots do all the menial work. Anyway this is fine until some naughty hackers break into the London computer and fiddle with it. Suddenly the computer turns into a rebellious rapscallion and reprograms its robots to go on the rampage.

Luckily there is a saviour who has volunteered to enter the immense complex of the London computer, locate all ten pieces of the Switching Code and insert them in the correct places — yes, YOU. A tough job this one, but you have a faithful robotic hound called Poddy to help you complete the mission.

The game is icon-driven, the icons being displayed as 'pages' in the bottom right hand corner of the screen. The icons deal with controlling Poddy, carrying and using items collected during the quest, checking the current status of the man and his droid and game options such as joystick, keys etc. Pressing fire twice returns to the game and gives the player full control over the character. To the left of the icon display area is a scrolling message board where both help (after the **help** icon is selected) and game messages are displayed.

The character can walk left and right, and going off screen flicks you into the next location. He can also walk into and out of the foreground, doing so causes the screen to scroll up and down. Since the characters can walk behind objects on the screen, any that are likely to obstruct the view disappear at opportune moments. Most of the other characters in the game are mechanical, and since anything mechanical (apart from Poddy) is controlled by the computer they tend to be rather nasty and thwart your heroic efforts. If you've collected the first aid kit then you can give yourself medical treatment if wounds have been inflicted upon you by the maniacal mechanoids.

To control Poddy effectively he has to be in your immediate vicinity, so until you get used to controlling both characters your progress through the system will be rather slow. Poddy also needs to be kept fully powered from the power points dotted around the complex. You also need energy, so keep an eye out for food.

You start the game in the central location where the Code ROMs have to be placed. When one has been collected return to the room and drop it. If it's correct then it'll automatically appear in one of the special cells. If it isn't then it'll fall to the floor and you'll have to collect another one.

Presentation 67%
No instructions included and the icon system is awkward to use.

Graphics 91%
Colourful, smooth moving and generally excellent graphics.

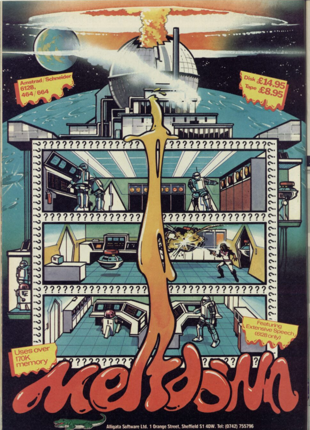
Sound 10%
The odd effect here and there but very disappointing.

Playability 67%
A good application of icons but they prove a bit hard to get the hang of.

Addictive qualities 70%
Should you cope with the icons then there is enough in the game to keep you going.

Value for money 78%
At £7.95 it represents good value for money.

Overall 72%
A bit hard to get into for the average games player.


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RAMBO

Ocean, £8.95 cass



Having rescued the prisoner he returns to the camp by helicopter

Rambo causes chaos in the enemy camp

CRITICISM

1 So they finally got round to releasing RAMBO on the Amstrad, well about time too. Unfortunately the game is far from brilliant. The graphics are reasonable although I feel Ocean could have made more of them, but the main problem seems to be the scrolling. It is awful. Though essentially a shoot em up RAMBO proves to be reasonably addictive and certainly very playable. On the whole it is a bit of a let down. Ocean are certainly capable of much better. Let's hope next time they can make a better job of a licensing deal

2 Ocean's recent releases have been a joy to review but with the advent of *Rambo* things have changed. For a software house that generally brings out good product for the Amstrad this is a disappointment. Probably the worst aspect of the game is scrolling which makes the game visually irritating. The game itself plays quite well, I found myself becoming addicted to it. Unfortunately *Rambo* is not too hard to play and consequently not hard to complete. Overall this is an adequate shoot em up but hardly impressive.

3 On initially loading the game, I was disappointed. While the presentation is well above average the game is not. Graphically it is reasonable but not impressive, Ocean have done much better in the past. On starting the game you meet a little tune — the Rambo theme, which is quite good but the sound should have been much better, more sound effects and better tunes would have improved it all around. Playing the game for the first time I found it reminiscent of WHO DARES WINS II but on continual play discovered that it is subtly different. The idea of the various weapons and when they should be used was a good one but they could have been incorporated in a better game. For me what really let the game down was the scrolling which is abysmally jerky. Ocean seem to have put everything into RAMBO that is required of them except somewhere along the production line someone forgot to design a good game.

No man, no war, no sprite can stop him, he's heading your way! Eight months after the film was on general release in Britain Rambo has finally made it on to the Amstrad. The game follows the main plot of the film very closely highlighting the necessity to kill everything that moves!

Colonel Trautman (your commanding officer from the days of Viet Nam) has sent you on this top secret mission to locate and photograph the whereabouts of some POW's left over from the Viet Nam war. Once you have photographed the POW's Rambo then has to head north where a waiting helicopter then takes him to safety, well that's a the plan anyway. The final words of Colonel Trautman as you embark on your mission are 'Do not engage the enemy. Do not attempt to rescue'.

Naturally Rambo, being the sort of demi-god that he is, loses the camera. So there is no choice left but to be a hero! Amongst the terrain supplied is the enemy camp complete with prisoners plus a temple that hides an extra weapon for you, weapons can be found around the landscape but use of heavy weapons alerts the guards to your presence. In the camp there is one of your all time buddies tied to a stake, and once you have cut him free you can then use your machine gun to blast the enemy. With your buddy rescued it's time to head north to the extraction point. When you arrive there you have an attack of the morals and decide to rescue the remaining captives. Piloting the helicopter, Rambo has to steer his way back to the camp and release them. Should he manage to do that then it's time to jump back into the helicopter to face his toughest challenge, the helicopter gunship. After which Rambo can hopefully go home, almost stab a few rotten G-men and have his tea!

Well enough of scenario, the game itself plays a bit like the arcade hit 'Commando' with a few differences. Your character is situated in the middle of the playing area while the background, full of bushes and the such like, scrolls around you. The enemy can approach you from all angles, shooting as they come. At the beginning of the game you have the selection of three weapons: knife, arrow, arrow with explosives on it. The weapon used determines the number of enemy soldiers attracted. Later in the game a machine gun and a rocket launcher can be acquired. The screen shows Rambo's immediate surroundings along with the score, weapons possessed and remaining life energy. At the beginning of the game you are given an energy level which must be made to last the whole game through.

Presentation 82%
Great packaging and concise instructions.

Graphics 68%
Adequate graphics but poor scrolling.

Sound 71%
A few tunes here and there but generally disappointing.

Playability 78%
Very easy to play and get a long way into.

Addictive qualities 62%
The game presents little challenge to the hardened gamester.

Value for money 70%
More game for the money would have been nice.

Overall 73%
With its good and bad points, it still turns out disappointing on the whole.

PANZADROME

Ariolasoft, £8.95 cass

The shoot em up section of the game

The computer giving you details of your armoury

CRITICISM

1 I found PANZADROME to be very slow in all aspects. The keyboard seemed to be very unresponsive and as a whole the game was very unimpressive. Flicking between the screens in the game takes quite a long time while the enemy tanks seem to appear from nowhere at all, which is a bit frustrating. The graphics are poor and let the game down terribly. Overall PANZADROME is a pretty disappointing entertainment which I wouldn't recommend to anyone.

2 I'm quite a fan of these pseudo—strategy games that combine arcade elements to make themselves a bit less boring. On loading *Panzadrome* I was looking forward to a good bash at destroying the odd tank or two. Sadly the game moves at a snail's pace and that makes it quite boring. I found the graphics poor and uninspiring for a game that has quite a nice scenario. I really liked the idea of travelling around gradually equipping your tank to do better battle but for my tastes *Panzadrome* is just too slow and once initial interest has been lost it isn't at all addictive. A pity, coming from Ariolasoft, but this one isn't setting new standards of enjoyment on your Amstrad.

3 Reading the inlay for PANZADROME you are led to believe that the game sounds pretty good but in reality it is let down by a great many factors, for me the biggest being the graphics which do not do the game justice. As to the sound that is pretty crude as well. On the other hand it is quite fun to play and I particularly like the idea of it but unfortunately the programmers have not implemented it very well on the Amstrad. It moves at quite a slow pace — a shame because you get so bored that you don't wish to continue playing it. On the whole PANZADROME is a pretty indifferent game, let down by poor programming

Panzadrome is the name of an awesome island inhabited by vicious robot tanks, some of which are more deadly than others. Being a sort of demi-hero you have had the mission of Panzadrome's destruction thrust upon yourself, and so you find yourself, cocooned within your own tank, on the island. Here you must locate and destroy the central computer that is the power source of the tanks. The computer is heavily defended but has one major weakness; it has plasma vents that form part of the central power grid which are susceptible to your weapons. The original programmer of the computer was aware of this fault and programmed guardians to protect each vent. The island is not just inhabited by tanks, at various points in the landscape are gun emplacements waiting to destroy intruders.

Situated round the island are factories which were designed to service the tanks and these can also be utilised to upgrade your own tank to a more powerful one. At the start of the game you are given a one shot effort with stone wheels — not a great start.

Your big problem is getting to these factories to upgrade your weaponry. All around are tanks that have been ordered by the central computer to destroy you on sight. It is well worth persevering at getting to a factory because as well as additional guns you can pick up such goodies as mortars and mines. Also available is a little gem called a Polycrete module. This comes into its own after a good slug-out of a battle. During battles craters form where you or the other tanks have fired at each other and missed. The Polycrete module allows you to bypass these craters and get on with killing the other tanks. Definitely a must.

The island itself is huge. When you get to the edge of a screen it flicks to reveal the next one. Fortunately your superiors installed a navigation system on your tank just before starting the mission. This comes in the form of an eight by eight grid. The screen that you are on is highlighted. Also in your possession is a short range scanner. This shows the tanks that you can see and the mines which are invisable to your normal sight. The status screens provides details on shields. If you are involved in a particularly bloody battle then you may lose the use of certain items of equipment. Once your shield is destroyed a single direct hit finishes the game for you. The status screen also provides handy information on mortars and mines remaining.

The further you progress into the game and destroy the vents then the harder the enemy tanks become to fight.

Presentation 79%
Detailed instructions.

Graphics 62%
A bit crude for the Amstrad.

Sound 52%
Hardly likely to cause a stir in your eardrums.

Playability 67%
The slow speed of the game takes the edge off the initial fun quite quickly.

Addictive Qualities 70%
On the understanding that you can cope with the speed you should be kept amused for a while.

Value for money 50%
Poor programming doesn't make for a bargain.

Overall 57%
A nice idea shame about the game.



BATTLE OF THE CHESS GIANTS

Chess is one of the most fascinating of all computer games, if a chess program does not feature in the monthly list of top computer games (and new versions often do) you can be sure that chess programs will be selling consistently well when many other computer games are long forgotten.

Perhaps it is the hint of artificial intelligence that provides the fascination — or the awesome thought that it has been calculated that the number of possible moves in the game of chess (greater than 10 raised to the power of 120) exceeds the number of atoms in the universe and that for a computer to calculate all the legal moves in a perfect game considering every possibility could take many thousands of years. After one move by each side there are over 1000 possible positions, after two moves this increases to over a million.

Obviously a computer chess program cannot consider every possible move but must use a system of algorithms to calculate its best course of action and it is here that the skill of the programmer lies. How the programmer sets about this task is a source of study in itself and there are many books on the subject including a very readable *Chess Computer Handbook* by the International Master, David Levy.

What should you look for when choosing a chess program for your Amstrad? First of all make sure the program you are buying is chess and not Space Invader Chess or some other novelty variation which might make a brief appearance on the software racks. Graphics must be clear and the chess boards and pieces easy to recognise on both the Amstrad colour and green screen monitors.

The program must understand all the rules of chess including draw by threefold repetition and by the fifty move rule — when a draw is declared if there have been fifty moves without a piece capture or pawn move. Chess computers should play a reasonably strong game of chess at a fast response time, no matter what kind of chess player you are, there is little point in waiting patiently for a chess computer to make a perfectly obvious move. If you are a club chess player — or thinking of joining a club after practising on your micro, the computer should play a challenging game of chess at tournament level — about 30 moves in one hour. If you like chess problems or wish to study middle-game or end-game positions the program should have an easy set-up mode and for those who want to experiment with opening variations, a take-back and step forward option is useful. Of course, you can use these options to cheat so that you never need lose a game against your micro, but they are useful to the serious chess enthusiast.

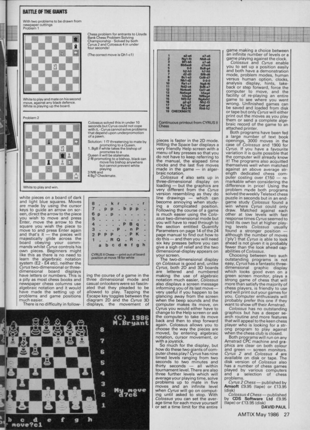
Other features to look for are:— the ability to replay a whole game from computer memory, print out a record of the game either move by move or as a complete record, the ability to change sides in mid-game, offer hints if requested, have a next best move option and be able to display the computers analysis of the board position at any time. Chess clocks for computer and opponent are included in some programs and if there is a Supervisor mode you can play chess against another human whilst the computer merely checks the legality of each move. If a learning level is included in the program together with the ability to offer hints those learning chess should not be discouraged. A computer chess program can be a very patient tutor. Voice chess programs are available if you like your computer to talk to you and a feature added to some recent programs is the ability to display the chess board on screen in a three dimensional view in addition to the usual flat chess diagram approach.

Two feature packed chess programs for the Amstrad are *Cyrus 2 Chess* programmed by **Intelligent Chess Software** for **Amsoft** and *Colossus 4 Chess* programmed by **Martin Bryant** and published by **CDS Software**. Both programs are aimed at the chess enthusiast as well as the novice player and they surpass almost all the best chess computer programs of only a short time ago, even many of the dedicated chess computers to be found in the High Street stores are put in the shade by these two micro giants — so how do they compare with each other?

Both programs open by default with a three dimensional view of the board set up ready to play. The *Cyrus* graphics are outstanding with black and

BATTLE OF THE GIANTS

	Cyrus 2	Colossus 4
Graphic Display 3D	Very Good	Poor
2D	Good	Good
Levels	9	Infinite
Moves by Cursor	Yes	Yes
Moves by Algebraic Entry	No	Yes
Moves by Joystick	No	Yes
Opening Book	1900 Moves	3000 Moves
Take Back	Yes	Yes
Step Forward	Yes	Yes
Replay Game	Yes	Yes
Load/Save Game	Yes	Yes
Demo Mode	Yes	Yes
Set Up	Good	Good
Problems	Up to mate in 5	Up to Mate in 7
Infinite Mode	Yes	Yes
Force Move	Yes	Yes
Hints	Yes	Yes
Change Sides	Yes	Yes
Invert Board	Yes	Yes
Analysis	Yes	Yes
Draw by Repetition	Yes	Yes
Draw by 50 Move Rule	Yes	Yes
Draw by Insufficient Material	No	Yes
Human v Human	Yes	Yes
Print Out Record	Yes	No
Next Best Move Option	No	Yes
Endgame Play	Fair	Good
Change Display Colour	No	Yes
Display Legal Moves	No	Yes
Alter Playing Style	No	Yes
Set Time Controls	No	Yes
Self Mates	No	Yes
Help Mates	No	Yes



BATTLE OF THE GIANTS

With two problems to be drawn from newpaper cuttings

Problem 1

Chess problem for entrants to Lloyds Bank Chess Problem Solving Championship - Solved by both Cyrus 2 and Colossus 4 in under four seconds!

(The correct move is Qh1-c1)

White to play and mate on his second move, against any black defence. White is playing up the board.

Problem 2

Colossus solved this in under 10 seconds but Cyrus could not cope with it, - Cyrus cannot solve problems that depend upon underpromotion of a pawn.

Solution: 1 f7 threatening to mate by promoting to a Queen.
1..Bg8 if white takes the bishop of promotes to a Queen it will be stalemate.
2 f8 promoting to a bishop, black can move his bishop anywhere but cannot prevent white playing
3 Nf6 and
4 Bg7 Checkmate.

White to play and win.

1	e2-e4	e7-e5
2	Ng1-f3	Nb8-c6
3	Bf1-b5	a7-a6
4	Bb5xc6	d7xc6
5	0-0	Bc8-g4
6	h2-h3	h7-h5
7	d2-d3	Bf8-d6
8	Bc1-e3	Qd8-d7
9	Nb1-d2	0-0-0
10	Ra1-c1	Ng8-f6
11	Nd2-c4	Bd6-e7
12	Nc4xe5	Qd7-e6
13	Ne5xg4	h5xg4
14	h3xg4	Nf6xg4
15	Nf3-h2	Ng4xh2
16	g2-g3	Nh2-f3
17	Kg1-g2	Qe6-g4
18	Be3-f4	Rh8-h2
19	CHECKMATE	

Continuous printout from CYRUS II Chess

white pieces on a board of dark and light blue squares. Moves are made by using the cursor keys to guide an arrow on screen, direct the arrow to the piece you wish to move and press Enter, move the arrow to the square you wish the piece to move to and press Enter again and that's it — the pieces will majestically glide across the board obeying your commands whilst *Cyrus* controls his own pieces. Beginners might like this as there is no need to learn the algerbraic notation system (E2 - E4 etc), neither the *Cyrus* two-dimensional or three-dimensional board displays have letters or numbers. This is a pity as most chess books and newspaper chess columns use algebraic notation and it would have made the setting up of problems and game positions much easier.

There is no difficulty in following the course of a game in the three dimensional mode and casual onlookers were so fascinated that they pleaded to be allowed to play. Tapping the Escape key toggles between the diagram 2D and the *Cyrus* 3D displays, the movement of pieces is faster in the 2D mode. Hitting the Space bar displays a very friendly Help screen with a menu of key presses so that you do not have to keep referring to the manual, the elapsed time clocks and the last five moves made in the game — in algerbraic notation.

```
8 . . k r . . . r
7 . p p . b p p .
6 p . p . . . . .
5 . . . . . . . .
4 . . . . P B q .
3 . . . P . n P .
2 P P P . . P K .
1 . . R Q . R . .
  a b c d e f g h
```

CYRUS II Chess — print out of board position at move 18 for white

Colossus 4 also sets up in three-dimensional display on loading — but the graphics are very different from the *Cyrus* version resembling as they do line drawings — which can become annoying when studying a complicated position. Following the course of a game is much easier using the *Colossus* two-dimensional mode but you will have to read through to the section entitled Quantify Parameters on page 14 of the 24 page manual to find out how to do this — and then you will need six key presses before you can give a sigh of relief and the two dimensional-display appears on your screen.

The two-dimensional display on *Colossus* is good and, unlike *Cyrus*, both 2D and 3D boards are lettered and numbered making the use of algebraic notation much easier, *Colossus* also displays a screen message informing you of its last move — very useful if you happen to be glancing away from the screen when the beep sounds and the computer makes its move, on Cyrus you would either have to change to the Help screen or ask the computer to take its move back and then to step forward again. Colossus allows you to choose the way the pieces are moved, by entering algebraic notation, cursor movement, or with a joystick.

So much for the display, but how do these two giants of computer chess play? *Cyrus* has nine timed levels ranging from two seconds to two minutes and thirty seconds — all within tournament level. There are also three further levels which will average your playing time, solve problems up to mate in five moves and an infinite level when *Cyrus* will go on computing until asked to stop. With *Colossus* you can set the average time for each move yourself or set a time limit for the entire game making a choice between an infinite number of levels or a game playing against the clock.

Colossus and *Cyrus* enable you to set up a position easily and both have a demonstration mode, problem modes, human versus human option, clocks, analysis display, hints, take-back or step forward, force the computer to move, and the facility of re-playing an entire game to see where you went wrong. Unfinished games can be saved and loaded from disk or tape but only *Cyrus* will either print out the moves as you play them or send a complete algebraic record of the game to an attached printer.

Both programs have been fed a large number of text book openings, 3000 moves in the case of *Colossus* and 1900 for *Cyrus*. If you have a favourite variation it is quite possible that the computer will already know it! The programs also acquitted themselves well when matched against an above average strength dedicated chess computer costing over £150 — remarkable when considering the difference in price! Using the problem mode both programs solved the weekly Teletext chess puzzle in seconds but in an endgame study *Colossus* found a win where *Cyrus* could only draw. Matched against each other at low levels with fast response times *Cyrus* seemed to hold its own but at higher playing levels *Colossus* usually found a stronger position — although the number of moves ('ply') that *Cyrus* is able to look ahead is not given it is probably fewer than the look ahead capabilities of *Colossus*.

Choosing between two such outstanding programs is not easy, *Cyrus* has a fantastic three-dimensional graphic display which looks good even on a green screen monitor, plays a strong game of chess that will more than satisfy the majority of chess players, is friendly to use and will print out your games for you. Computer enthusiasts will probably prefer this one if they want to show off their Amstrad.

Colossus has no outstanding graphics but has a deeper search routine and more features that will appeal to the keen chess player who is looking for a strong program to play against when the chess club is closed.

Both programs will run on any Amstrad CPC machine and graphics are clear on both colour and green — screen monitors. *Cyrus 2* and *Colossus 4* are available on disk or tape. The disk version of *Colossus* also has a number of chess games played by various computers and a selection of chess problems.

Cyrus 2 Chess — published by **Amsoft** £9.95 (tape) or £13.95 (disk)

Colossus 4 Chess — published by **CDS Software Ltd** £9.95 (tape) or £13.95 (disk)

DAVID PAUL



DEATHWAKE

Quicksilva, £7.95 cass

The strategic screen

CRITICISM

1 If you remember ADMIRAL GRAF SPEE, one of Amsoft's early efforts, you will realise that DEATHWAKE is on roughly the same lines. This game tests your abilities to the full, not just your reflexes but the strategic elements test your mind as well. I found that DEATHWAKE was very playable and addictive but the graphics didn't really do it justice. On the whole it is a reasonable game but if its presentation had been improved, especially on the the graphics front, I feel it would have been a winner. As it is, it's a good game with a poor appearance, and this lets it down.

2 As blow em ups on the Amstrad go *Deathwake* is quite an impressive offering, though to be honest the competition with which it has to contend is far from amazing. It's a a weensy bit derivative in places as well, the inspiration seems to have been supplied by *Beach Head*, although *Deathwake* departs from the original style set by US Gold and is actually quite competent. *Deathwake*'s main failing is the graphics, exceptional they aren't but adequate they are. Apart from that I'm sure Amster fans of this genre will be able to get a worthwhile amount of fun from this release.

3 BEACH HEAD was a very good game in its time but DEATHWAKE seems, to me, merely to be a revamped BEACH HEAD. While Quicksilva have improved on certain elements the basic game remains the same. The different stages make it quite a playable game but I don't think its lasting appeal is particularly high — once a stage is mastered there is no compulsion to complete it again, making DEATHWAKE somewhat unaddictive. Graphically the game is reasonable but not overly impressive and the same really goes for the sound. For BEACH HEAD fans this might be a good buy, but for the rest of us it is a bit repetitive.

The War that has been raging for the last four years is not going well for the allies. The marauding enemy has taken vast areas of land in the north and the west. At this time the allies need all the time they can get to re-equip their floundering forces. While at the same time the enemy is nearing completion of a deadly master weapon. With this atomic weapon the allies are surely to fall to the black banner of the enemy.

All attempts to destroy the research base have failed with no survivors. The allies' last hope lies in the destroyer The Undaunted. Plans obtained by spies show that the base lies in a narrow inlet in a range of mountains. Analysis of the plans indicates that if The Undaunted can get into the channel her guns are capable of thwarting the enemy's attempt at world domination. Unfortunately for you the enemy knows you possess these plans and will put out all their forces to destroy The Undaunted.

Enough of the game scenario and down to the nitty gritty about what the game is actually like. *Deathwake* is split into several arcade type sequences similar in a way to *Beach Head*. Between these arcade sequences you are presented with a map screen which shows the position of both the allies and the enemy's units. On this screen you move your units to attack the enemy's and after a short while the computer decides the outcome and subsequent damage of any battles that have taken place. Then it's back to the arcade sequences.

The first arcade screen has The Undaunted and two other smaller ships pitted against the enemy aircraft. You have control of a cursor which you must move over the aircraft and fire in order to destroy them. Should a plane manage to get near to you then it drops a torpedo, which must be dodged. The Undaunted can only sustain three direct hits before the game finishes.

The second sequence provides you with a view from the deck of The Undaunted. This time you must fend off an attack from patrol boats. In the third sequence you must guide The Undaunted though a mine field. Should you hit a mine then the ship, not unsurprisingly, sinks. On the fourth screen it's your aim to destroy the three battle cruisers guarding the entrance to the inlet. You must judge the guns' elevation. Only the correct trajectory will destroy a ship. The final arcade sequence requires you to fire missiles through the windows of the plant before they close. Not an easy task as, once again, you must get the elevation of your guns correct. The Undaunted is equipped with a damagé percentage rating, when this reaches a critical level then the game ends as does the war but this time in favour of the enemy.

Presentation 83%
Adequate instructions but generally very good.

Graphics 72%
Good but the Amstrad is capable of much better things.

Sound 62%
Nothing to shout about.

Playability 74%
Frustrating but fun.

Addictive qualities 69%
If you can survive the initial frustration then you may enjoy it.

Value for money 83%
Quite a few stages for the money.

Overall 78%
Should appeal to *Beach Head* fans, otherwise a bit limiting in general.

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GET DEXTER

PSS and ERE, £9.95 cass, £14.95 disk
Author: Renui Herbulot, Graphics: Michel Rho, Music: Jean Louis Valero



Remember *Macadam Bumper*? Well here is another French import from the company called **ERE** marketed in Britain by PSS. So much for its background, what of the story?

You'd think that that by the year 2912 mankind would have stopped thinking about war and blowing its fellow humans to kingdom come, but no. Boys will be boys so to speak, and in this year there is still a problem with the different countries of the world running after their tails and stockpiling nuclear wea pons. Worse still, that in this day and age this gross stupidity doesn't just affect mother Earth, it has much farther reaching consequences. You see, apart from pouring technology into the development of even more powerful weapons man has been busy colonising the stars, and this is where the 'farther reaching consequences' applies.

On the planet **XUL 3** the populace are getting worried. News from Earth has just reached them and things aren't looking good — the Great Truce has been terminated and the Council of Sages has announced that war is imminent. Bad news? You bet buster! If war happens on Earth then a by-product of the conflict will be that all life will cease to exist on the innocent planet of XUL 3. Why? Because all of XUL 3's power comes from an orbiting pyramid-shaped satellite which is controlled by an Earth-based computer called **Zarxas**. If there's a war then Zarxas will be destroyed, the satellite won't function and consequently XUL 3 won't have any power . . .

As you can imagine, the people of XUL 3 are worried to say the least and they have drawn up a plan to send their best android, *Crafton*, to Earth to steal the Zarxas Satellite Memory Processor, which not only controls XUL 3 but all colony satellites from the spheroid one orbiting XUL 1 to the cuboid supplier of XUL GS.

The mission is very hazardous and the Zarxas defence system has to be fully penetrated before the processor can be recovered. Crafton hasn't been sent alone on this desperate quest and has a rather strange but very useful little alien as company, a Podocephale called Xunk. This friendly, intelligent and very cheeky little alien bounds about on his one foot and can jump, annoy baddies and warn Crafton when something is dangerous.

Get Dexter is a *Knight Lore*



style game and is played and viewed in the same fashion as the Ultimate classic. There are fifty rooms in the Zarxas complex which have to be explored and there are many problems which are encountered and have to be be overcome. To complete his mission Crafton must locate the central chamber of the Zarxas control system and acquire the means of access: an eight figure code. Each figure of the code is known by the scientists working in the system and these codes have to be requisitioned by interrogating each of them. The process of interrogation is a mystery, but there are certain objects which can be picked up and used on the potty professors' synapses to get them to spill the beans. No clues, but try needling it out of them. By the way, a room containing a professor is heavily guarded by robots, which thunder out a few seconds after you enter the room. There are objects which can be used to thwart them, though . . .

Moving around the complex requires negotiating doors which can only be opened with passes. Luckily passes have been left lying around, but they have first to be found and they 're not always in the most accessible of places! The game allows full interaction between Crafton and objects found within the complex and he can push, pull, pick up (one object at a time), put on top of one another and leap on/off things like tables, chairs, beds, desks or whatever. Sometimes interacting with objects can have quite amusing results — try jumping onto a swivel chair and using the bed as a trampoline for a while.

The complex isn't just inhabited by scientists, oh no. There are other people and things living in the various rooms including nurses, a mohican punk refugee from *Macadam Bumper* (remember him? he was on the loading screen) and a load of gribbly robots. If any of these touch our hero then he loses some of his energy which is shown numerically on-screen. If this number reaches zero then he's forced to shut down and the mission terminated. Luckily there are 'holophonic cabins' — if Crafton is guided into one of these then his energy is replenished. The inhabitants of the Zarxas system can be disabled for a while by giving them an object they like, but which object?

Throughout the game Xunk follows Crafton about, although he has to be recalled when Crafton is about to leave a room. He's a useful little devil and warns you if something is dangerous by standing by it and squarking (some floors, for example, are deadly to walk on). He also gives a hand against marauding robots by running in front of them. What a nice fellow.

If Crafton manages to get all the codes he then has to find the Zarxas access coridor and use the codes to guide him through the system. Not being in possession of these vital codes results in instant death as soon as the access corridor is entered — so find them or watch mankind die.

CRITICISM

1 **This is what an arcade adventure should be — brilliant graphics, excellent characters and full interaction with just about every object in the place. The problems within the game are nicely balanced — tricky at first but not impossible to solve. The graphics and sound are truly marvelous, and some of the detail in the various locations is incredible — computers, beds, pot plants are all there. One thing, I don't know why PSS changed the name to *Get Dexter* — I thought that the original French name *Crafton and Xunk* was fine. Anyway, if you're after a superlative arcade adventure then buy this, you won't be disappointed.**

2 Excellent graphics, good sound and plenty of colour make *Get Dexter* immediately appealing to look at and listen to, supporting a game that is both original in theme (making a change from some of the arcade clones going round at the moment), and fun to play. It comes with several options including a choice of language for the instructions (indicating its foreign pedigree) plus the essential joystick/keyboard choice. I was pleasantly surprised by *Get Dexter* which deserves to do well. Congratulations ERE.

3 *I didn't particularly enjoy ERE's last release* Macadam Bumper *but this is certainly what I call excellent stuff. The graphics are great and coupled with the superb sound it makes for a very enjoyable game. It plays very realistically and objects behave just as you would expect them to. The game itself is pitched at just the right level with the earlier problems being relatively easy to solve, while as you continue through the game it gets progressively harder which is just what games should be. I found* Get Dexter *very enjoyable to play and it kept me hooked for hours and doubtless I will be returning to it. I don't think many games players will be complaining about this one if they buy it — and you can't go far wrong if you do buy.*

Presentation 91%
Instructions in the form of a humourous comic strip and numerous control options.

Graphics 95%
Beautifully coloured perspective graphics and excellent sprites.

Sound 92%
Great music, with drumbeats and all.

Playability 89%
Tricky to get into initially but once you know what you're doing . . .

Addictive qualities 93%
. . . it's very difficult to stop playing.

Value for money 89%
Rather expensive, but worth every penny.

Overall 94%
A brilliant arcade adventure which poses wicked problems and allows full interaction with just about anything on screen.

FORBIDDEN PLANET



Design Design, £7.95 cass, £14.95 disk
Author: Simon Brattel

The Evil Lord is all set to re—rule the galaxy. The last time he ruled the galaxy no one had a good time at all so quite a few people are understandably concerned over his latest attack of megalomania. As one of these people is also a bit of hero it comes as no surprise when a little post card falls through the door conscripting you for a stint of galaxy saving. Afraid of being barred from the British Legion as a conscientious objecter, the job is accepted. Kitted out with the latest bit of death dealing space shippery with a full tank, you are dropped into the warzone — *The Forbidden Planet*.

The plan held within the Evil Lord's criminally warped mind for total universal domination is to use his final message, a message so devastating that ultimate power will be not be denied him. At the moment the message is split into many parts on *The Forbidden Planet* and is guarded fervently by the notorious Brattelian defence screens. To stop the reinstatement of Mr Nasty all the codes need to be collected, only then will you and the universe be safe enough to buy life insurance policies at less than extortionate rates.

The craft in your possession is an atmosphere-only ship and it's on a representation of this machine's windscreen that the main action takes place. Four keys (everything is totally definable) move a cursor around the main view and the ship mimicks the cursor's movement as it whizzes around screen and the view of the landscape. In scenery terms, *Forbidden Planet* is not the most interesting place in the universe, it's made out of dots. Built onto the dots are number of enemy emplacements in one of three forms: towers, poles or bunkers. All these objects are shown with hidden line 3D vector graphics and all move around very realistically. A planetside map can be drawn up at any time by pressing key 1. The detailed map is heavily keyed and annotated showing various defences, code and energy stores in the immediate area. Also highlighted on the map are plasma ducts. These passive defences guide you through a sort of maze-like construction of force fields represented as a set of rectangles. Fly through these and all is well, miss them and your energy, shown by a number of krell meters underneath the windscreen, sadly depletes. With no energy left, a fate worse than death awaits you — the now ubiquitous Design Design high score table.

Though it says *Forbidden Planet* on the package this is not all you get for your hard earned groats. Hidden within the game are two sub-games and also there's an updated version of *Halls of the Things* with new maze types.

Presentation 91%
The usual Design Design front with the usual Design Design attention to detail is present plus a rather useful demo mode.

Graphics 90%
Statically dull when moving the towers, but plasma ducts and dotty floorscapes are all very impressive indeed.

Sound 89%
Not normally noted for liking sound on games, des Des have done very well.

Playability 63%
Forbidden Planet is not the easiest of games to get into and is a mite awkward to play.

Addictive qualities 64%
This is where FP falls down a bit, though the action may be fast and furious it does tend to get a little repetitive.

Value for money 89%
Quite a way below the normal asking price for this sort of thing and the package includes three other freebie offerings.

Overall 80%
Though not the best offering yet from Des Des, certainly one of the most impressive. May be worth a look at if you like their stuff.

CRITICISM

1

FORBIDDEN PLANET is a bit DARK STARY to say the least. It's immediate graphic similarity is a bit offputting, though after a couple of games the differences do make themselves apparent. As a game FORBIDDEN PLANET is a bit dull as it tries to provide long term appeal by making itself very difficult to play, after getting the hang of things I ended up feeling that the effort required wasn't really worth it. It is technically excellent, however, and the extra games included make it worth getting. All the games on the one cassette may not be brilliant but they represent good value for money.

2

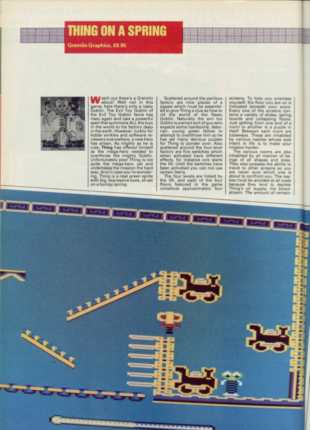
On intially loading *Forbidden Planet* I thought it was a bit too much like *Dark Star* for my liking but on playing it further it is quite a significant improvement. The Design Design programmers seem to be excellent coders but, despite the name of the software house, they don't seem to be that good at designing games. For me the best game on the tape is the new improved *Halls of the Things* which in my opinion is still Design Design's best game to date. Graphically *Forbidden Planet* is very good, the scrolling is some of the best ever seen. On the whole *Forbidden Planet* is a nice bit of programming but the game seems to be missing and with that said it's still worth buying because of all the little extras included with it.

3

The first reaction to playing this program is 'Oh no, not another DARK STAR'. On further playing you soon find that it has plenty of new features, and although not being a totally original product has plenty of things to keep you going. It's certainly a challenging game and it takes several attempts to get going properly. If you've already got DARK STAR then you might be disappointed, but if you haven't and want a really good shoot em up, then try this.

THING ON A SPRING

Gremlin Graphics, £8.95

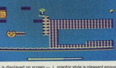


Watch out there's a Gremlin about! Well not in this game, here there's only a nasty Goblin. The Evil Toy Goblin of the Evil Toy Goblin fame has risen again and cast a powerful spell that summons ALL the toys in the world to his factory deep in the earth. However, luckily for kiddie winkles and software reviewers everywhere, a new hero has arisen. As mighty as he is cute, **Thing** has offered himself as the mega-hero needed to overthrow the mighty Goblin. Unfortunately poor Thing is not quite the mega-hero yet and undertakes the mission the hard way. And in case you're wondering, Thing is a neat green sprite with big, expressive eyes, all set on a boingy spring.

Scattered around the perilous factory are nine pieces of a jigsaw which must be assembled to give Thing a clue as how to rid the world of the Nasty Goblin. Naturally the evil toy Goblin is a smart sort of guy who expects some handsome, debonair, young green fellow to attempt to overthrow him so he has set many devious puzzles for Thing to ponder over. Also scattered around the four-level factory are five switches which when activated have different effects, for instance one starts the lift. Until the switches have been activated you can not use certain items.

The four levels are linked by the lift, and each of the four floors featured in the game constitute approximately four screens. To help you orientate yourself, the floor you are on is indicated beneath your score. Every one of the screens contains a variety of slides, spring boards and collapsing floors. Just getting from one end of a room to another is a puzzle in itself. Between each room are tubeways. These are inhabited by various nasties whose sole intent in life is to make your mission harder.

The various rooms are also inhabited by all manner of beings of all shapes and sizes. They also possess the ability to travel to other screens so you are never sure which one is about to confront you. The nasties must be avoided at all costs because they tend to deplete Thing's oil supply, his bloodstream. The amount of remain-



ing oil is displayed on screen — no oil means no Thing and end of mission, so it's nice to know it can be boosted by finding an oil can.

To help you and Thing on his mission there is a musical accompaniment that plays as you progress through the game.

CRITICISM

1 **Gremlin Graphics have done wonders with the old Commodore favourite and come out with one of their best games to date. All the graphics are very well drawn and the colour is superb with only very few problems arising with the magnificent scrolling. One of the best things about *Thing On A Spring* is undoubtedly the music which makes good use of the under-exploited Amstrad sound chip, a superb little tune is played constantly through the whole of the game. *Thing* has a very good balance of hard and easy stages which make you want to have just one more game — because you'll solve it this time, won't you? There's good value for money here with no doubt endless hours — dare I say days — of unceasing frustration and pleasure. I thought *Thing On A Spring* to be one of the most playable games at the moment and would recommend it to any self-respecting Amstrad owner.**

2 *Thing on a Spring* is a bit of a software cutie, the Thing that's on the spring is a jolly little character probably destined for fame and renown with many an Amstrad user. Though borrowing aspects from many other releases, basically it's platform game, but a lot in the way of originality been infused into the game. Though not immediately astounding, the graphic style is pleasant enough and fits in well with the character of the whole. A very enjoyable and bouncy (spring-like) theme tune also accompanies the title screen and quite impressive it is too. Overall *Thing on a Spring* is rather good and should be well worth searching out in your local computer store.

3 *It has to be said that* Thing on a Spring *has some of the best music to ever be heard on the Amstrad. As to the game itself it is a sort of platform game-cum-arcade adventure and it's pretty good. The only real disappointment is some of the animation which is a bit flickery. With that said the game is both fun to play and very addictive. Thing is a really cute hero who is probably destined to become the next Roland or Miner Willy. Not one to be missed, buy it and you won't be disappointed.*

Presentation 90%
Great instructions and scenario.

Graphics 91%
Both colourful and good looking, pity about the flicker.

Sound 90%
A jolly good piece of music.

Playability 92%
Very easy to get into though a touch frustrating at times.

Addictive qualities 91%
Once you've solved a few problems it is hard to resist coming back for more.

Value for money 90%
Lots of enjoyment to be had for the money.

Overall 92%
A very original, first rate game.



THE CDS MEGA CHESS COMPETITION

Win a Lewis Chess Set worth over £150 and copies of the *Colossus 4 Chess*

The life of a competition minion, as I may have said before, is not a mind taxing one. Lugging the mailsacks up and down the stairs and piling through the trivia of the day doesn't stretch your brain at all. Here I am, brain the size of a planet, and only a space the size of a Ludlovian car park to manoeuvre in. It's only when clever people like **CDS** release real mind taxers like *Colossus 4 Chess* that my brain gets any real exercise — like did you know that the game of chess was originally developed from *CHATURAGNA* in the 5th century by the Hindus and was originally for four players who rolled a dice to see which piece was to be moved? No? Well then, you probably don't know that traders took the game to Persia where it became known as *SHATRANJ* and that by the 10th century it was played throughout Europe from whence it made its way to England with the Norman Conquests.

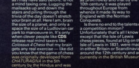
Is there no end to the talents of a competition minion? Unfortunately that's all I know except that the Isle of Lewis chess pieces, found at Uig on the Isle of Lewis in 1831, were made in either Britain or Scandinavia around the 12th century and are currently in the British Museum.

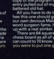
So now you know but what you don't know is that **CDS** are offering a Lewis chess set and board worth about £150 and a copy of the program to the first entry pulled out of my tired and battered old hat.

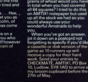
All you have to do is . . . Hee, hee this one should get you as our own devious Malcolm, of word surgeon fame, has come up with a real stinker.

There are 64 squares on a chess board as all of you who can count to 70 know. If however you were to put one grain of wheat on square one, two on the next, four on the third and continue to double the number with each square, how many grains of wheat would you have in total when you had covered all 64 squares? I tried to do this on AMTIX! notepaper but used up all the stock we had so you could always use your wonderful Amstrads to help you.

When you've got an answer, jot it down on a postcard not forgetting to specify if you'd like a cassette or disk version of the game as 10 runners up will receive a copy for their hard work. Send your entries to CHECKMATE, AMTIX!, PO Box 10, Ludlow, SY8 1AQ to arrive at my broom cupboard before the 27th of May.









THE MUSIC SYSTEM REALLY IS GOOD

JON BATES casts a tuneful eye over one of the best music utility for the Amstrad.

Here it is as promised in our sneak preview in February: *The Music System*. As you have no doubt noticed the amount of music programs for the Amstrad can be counted on the digits of a three-toed sloth. But crave no more. In fact look no further. *The Music System* (hereafter referred to as *TMS*) enables you to create, edit, and store tunes and sounds. It can be used in real or step time and displays all with excellent graphics and notation.

It was designed originally in a shortened form for the BBC, extensively reworked for the Commodore 64 and now it is available for the Amstrad. It is (by the time you read this) available in two forms: *TMS* and the Advanced Music System, which is only available on disk. Unfortunately we couldn't get our mitts on the *AMS* in time for this edition so a further update will follow.

It is best described as a music processor (as opposed to a word processor). Having said that, it is not an instructional program. Knowledge of music is assumed and so it could be a little tricky at first. However if you can beg or purchase a keyboard tutor, preferably one of those for single keyboards, it wouldn't take too long for you to master the art.

On loading the screen is separated into user-accessible work areas. The Command Line is accessed via the function keys. It is used for all filing, changing values of notes and other music parameters and providing info and help. Any heading accessed will display a pop-up menu that superimposes itself mid-screen. Each menu has sub menus which are accessed by highlighting the value you wish to change.

The best approach is to dive straight into the play mode via the piano keyboard on screen. The notes are played from the top two rows of the qwerty keys. I think some sort of overlay could be useful here (perhaps you could improvise with small sticky labels). Having played about you can record your tune by entering the record mode

Command line which gives access to pop-up menus

Your very own metronome

Barmeter showing memory allocation between the three channels.

Events stored

Pop-up menu with sub menu

Voice selector

Files Values Commands Info

Accidentals
Barlines
Dynamics
Notes
Envelope
Ties
Xtra
Locate

Accidental
Barline
Dynamic
Envelope
Rest
Tie

The editing area

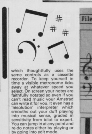
Voices one to three

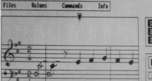
Volume selector

Envelope selector

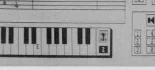
Octave selector

The mixing palette









which thoughtfully uses the same controls as a cassette recorder. To keep yourself in time a visible metronome ticks away at whatever speed you select. On screen your notes are faithfully notated so even if you can't read music your Amstrad can write it for you. It even has a 'resolution' interpreter which smooths out your duff playing into musical sense, graded in sensitivity from idiot to expert. You can jump in at any point and re-do notes either by playing or by going into edit mode.

Here the real stuff starts as notes can be individually pruned, preened, or otherwise altered according to the laws of music. Again this has an 'idiot proof' function that checks your barlines and key signatures and generally tidies up the mess your score is in. For music buffs you can enter tunes note by note on this mode. This is useful if you are not adept with the old fingers and can copy from a music score. Alternatively, your composing skill may be of such a high power that this is the only way to do it. The top right-hand corner of the screen shows you how much space is left in the note memory. Because it is a three-note chip you can add two more harmony lines to the previous masterpiece. Not only that but via the envelope commands you can change the sound of each voice individually. And of course the noise generator gives full rein to the percussive and other splishes and splashes you may desire.

The sound is limited only by the sound chip which does not let any real timbral changes to be made. To give *TMS* its due it does just about everything possible with the sound but with no filtering and very basic wave formations you are a bit lumbered. It comes with fourteen preset envelopes but you have the option to create and store as many as you want. The envelopes can be stored as a set in the files and recalled for future use. Your meisterwerk can be stored onto the files and generally chopped about so that sections repeat, voices change, and it all sounds a little better. Should you decide that you need to add bits into the middle (sudden inspiration can be like that), a notepad facility allows you to write up to 999 notes and insert them anywhere provided you have enough space.

To sum up it is the best music utility you are likely to find for the Amstrad. No messin' about! If you want to save money and time just buy it. They've thought of everything possible although an option to doddle around with the stereo would have been nice. It comes with a set of demo tunes to suit all musical tastes and you can change the screen colour if it offends you. The Advanced version has a printing mode for words and music, a chain sequencer that will link your songs into one huge work (The Amstrad Opera anyone?), and rumour has it that the boys at **Rainbird** are beavering away at a MIDI interface option that will really open up the system, allowing it to control lots of synthesizers, drum machines etc etc. Don't worry about waiting, you can send *TMS* back and for a moderate fee it can be updated into the *AMS*. If you write anything on it that you think is worthy then why not send the file to us. You never know we might even turn it into a competition.

The little keyboard echoes the notes as they play.



AN EDITOR, ASSEMBLER, MONITOR AND ANALYSER THAT REPRESENTS A NEW APPROACH TO MACHINE CODE DEVELOPMENT.

THE EDITOR

Produces tokenised source files which occupy about half the normal space and accelerate assembly to three times the normal speed.

* *Source files can be loaded/saved to and from tape and disc from within the editor. Source files from other popular assemblers can be loaded and tokenised.*
* *A full screen editor which replaces conventional text handling with a block/paragraph numbering scheme.*

THE ASSEMBLER

A full two-pass macro assembler (co-resident with the editor) which supports input/output from tape and disc, conditional assembly, intelligent assembly of subroutine libraries and inclusion of named files from tape or disc.

* *Built in calculator with access to symbol table after assembly.*
* *Symbol table may be saved and loaded for cross reference and selective assembly of subroutine libraries.*
* *Z80 mnemonics can be freely mixed with Phoenix, a high level compiling language.*

THE MONITOR

has all the usual features of a relocatable front-panel debugger plus:

* *Disassembly to screen, printer, tape or disc with CALL and JUMP labels automatically generated. Disassembled files can be loaded into the assembler, edited and re-assembled.*
* *4 slow running modes with a trace facility that allows the path of a program to be stored so that bugs can be traced back to their source.*
* *17 types of breakpoints are available – up to 8 can be set at any one time. Options include "down-count" and control of slow run modes.*

THE ANALYSER

A completely new concept in program debugging. This unique utility allows you to execute up to ten analyser programs that scrutinise your machine code program while it is running. When a particular condition is found the program will break with an option to trace the path taken.

For example, if a program crashes, writing extraneous data to the screen, the analyser can be set to run the program up to the point that a 'write' is made to a particular area of the screen. The path can then be listed to find where the error originated.





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Our recent feature on cassette related problems prompted reader JIM OLLERHEAD to write in and offer us advice which he has gained from his work as an AUDIO/T.V./VCR engineer for a number of years.



GETTING TO GRIPS WITH CASSETTE PROBLEMS

In this helpsheet article I am going to cover faults that can occur with a previously working system, so that if your machine has never loaded or saved anything at all then your particular problem may not be covered. I will, however, mention one particular exception to this simply because it was the devil of a job to pin-point. Although the fault occurred with a Dragon 32 (what's that?) it is equally possible with any machine using an external cassette. The symptoms were that programs recorded on the cassette would keep giving a read error but commercial programs would load perfectly. Missing out the scream, shout and throw-it-at-the-wall fault finding technique I'll go straight to the explanation.

The cassette in question possessed an Auto-Level Control circuit which was designed to make recording audio as easy as possible. When you lashed it up to a computer, however, the ALC gizmo would begin by hearing silence and respond by turning the wick right up on the sensitivity. Suddenly — POW! — in comes the header lead-in tone, ALC says 'Ohmigawd!' and turns down the sensitivity to near zero, allowing it to rise slowly as it gets used to the racket. Unfortunately, the header info was being sent out during this recovery time and was consequently lost. The solution was effected by poking the 'header length byte', which was fortunately in RAM, to give a longer header and allow the ALC more time to recover. I don't know if this is possible on an Amstrad but if it ain't then it's hard luck chum! You'll have to get a cassette without ALC built in, preferably with an adjustable 'input level' control (often the volume control will 'double-up' as an input control during recording). Of course, us CPC 464 owners won't have this problem, he said with a supercilious smirk.

DEGAUSSING AND SUCH

I hear cries of 'Do wot?' — well degaussing is simply the term us (ahem) professionals use to mean demagnetising and, much as I hate to disagree with folk, in 13 years of repairing all shapes and sizes of music centre and cassette recorder I never once found the need to use the head degausser. Furthermore I would like to hear an explanation of how these so-called head cleaner/demagnetiser cassettes actually work, as the device I was provided with was a mains plug-in job which was basically just a transformer with a soft iron core brought out of the case (unless you are well up on AC electrical theory an explanation of this wouldn't help much). If anyone knows better then I bow my head in deference but, as far as I know, the degausser was mainly a hangover from the old reel-to-reel days when heads were made of more easily magnetised metal than modern cassettes.

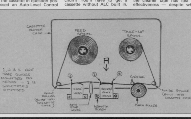
As far as cleaning is concerned, I would heartily dissuade anyone from using a head-cleaning cassette for a number of reasons: they're overpriced, they are slightly abrasive and over-use can lead to premature head death. They are thicker than normal tape and some decks can respond by tangling the cleaner tape all round their innards. You never know when the cleaner tape has lost its effectiveness — despite what the maker says on the inlay card. By far the best method is to clean heads by hand with (cheap) surgical spirit B.P. and cottonwool buds from the local chemist. A useful aid to inspection is one of those mirrors-on-a-stick that dentists use when looking at your gnashers — a small bit of mirror Araldited to a bent bit of wire coat-hanger would do sterling service as an alternative. What you are looking for are brownish deposits on the face of the head — oh and check the erase head while you're at it, 'cos we all tend to re-record over old stuff at some point, don't we?

Provided you are careful not to get it tangled, the pinch roller can best be cleaned by putting the deck into PLAY with the flap open and no cassette inserted, then pressing a spirit-soaked cloth gently against the roller as it rotates. After doing the pinch roller, press the PAUSE button — without disengaging PLAY — and hold the cloth against the capstan (the silver 'pin' that the roller presses on) and clean that also.

AZIMUTH REVISITED

Not every cassette recorder has an access hole for this adjustment and, even if they have, it can be hidden beneath a glued-on tinfoil trim which you'll have to prise off carefully with a knife. If you check out fig.2 you can see that one side of the head is mounted on a spring while the other is fixed. The spring side is, of course, the adjustment side and you are aiming to get the head as perpendicular as possible. Symptoms of misalignment, apart from read errors, are a 'woolly' sound to the data or music when played through the speaker together with a drop in volume, but as these are the same symptoms as those given by dirty heads it's always wise to try a spot of cleaning first. It is possible to align heads by ear (but not on the 464) by playing a tape with lots of treble on it — violin music is ideal — and adjusting for the 'sharpest' sound but count the turns or parts of a turn of the screwdriver so that you can put the head back if no improvement is heard. After adjustment, nick some nail varnish from an available female and paint the top of the screw and head bracket with it.

This effectively seals the adjusting screw sufficiently to stop it turning when the deck is used, without being so permanent that it cannot be re-adjusted in the future. If, after all this, the sound is still 'woolly' then I'm afraid it's a dockyard job as chances are the head is U/S. Before taking your recorder to a service department, check the minimum charge as this may often be approaching the cost of the machine, especially once the cost of any parts fitted has been added to this.



1 TAPE TRANSPORT SYSTEM MECHANISM IN 'PLAY' POSITION



② TAPE'S-EYE VIEW OF THE TAPE PATH — LOOKING FROM DIRECTION A IN ①

MUNCH MUNCH

A very common problem that I have not noticed anyone write much about is that of a machine 'chewing' tapes. To understand what causes this you will need to look at the diagrams. The speed and movement of the tape past the head is controlled by the capstan and pinch roller, the tape being gripped between these when PLAY or RECORD is pressed. If you look at fig 2 you will see that the capstan is the major tape driving force in the deck as it is attached to a rather large flywheel which is belt driven directly form the motor. The take-up spool is also generally driven from the same belt but via a clutch arrangement similar to a car clutch in principle. A little thought will show the reason for this: firstly, the capstan/pinch roller pulls the tape past the head at a constant one and seven eighths inches per second, while the take-up spool takes up (surprise!) the slack. Now as the take-up spool fills up with tape it must also turn slower since the speed is maintained constant by the capstan and flywheel even though the diameter of the take-up spool is increasing — so something's gotta give! Consequently, the more the take-up spool fills up, the more the clutch has to slip, whilst still maintaining enough torque (turning force) to rotate the spool.

Now then, if you are using quid-a-gross C90's bought from the back of the market, chances are the internal mechanism of them won't be quite up to your TDK standard. So you bung your Supa-Economy tapes, complete with supa-stiff mechanism, into your long-suffering tape deck and what happens? The pinch roller and capstan say 'No problem' and drag the tape through, mindless of the fact that the overworked clutch can't turn the spool, and tape begins to spill into the internals of your deck. The first you know of this is a manic speeding up of the sound culminating in an ominous silence.

It's odds on that you now won't be able to eject the offending cassette as the spilled tape will have wrapped itself around the capstan in a tight little cylinder of mangled tape. All you can do now is to disconnect the machine from the mains, and then keep the eject button depressed while simultaneously trying to prise the cassette out with a thin screwdriver — this may sound a bit drastic but a service engineer would only have to do the same! Don't prise the actual flap of the machine, but try to insert the screwdriver into the actual cassette tape (which has had it anyway) near to where you know the capstan to be. Be careful not to exert too great a force but alternatively don't expect it to be a doddle — the tape will have a VERY tight grip around the capstan. Once you have got the tape out, if you're lucky, all should be O.K. Before passing the machine as fit, get a known good C90 and wind it on so that the right hand, or take-up, side is nearly full — this will put maximum strain on the clutch. Now insert the tape and get under a good light where you can see the spools through the window in the flap, keep a finger poised over the STOP button, then press PLAY. If the machine starts to play but the take-up spool still doesn't rotate, then punch the STOP button and I'm afraid it's another dockyard job for a faulty clutch. If it works OK then keep an eye on it for a while, just in case, then count your blessings and buy decent tapes in future.

WOW AND FLUTTER

This onomatopoeic (look it up!) fault can be a direct consequence of a tape being chewed up in the mechanism, and can range from a 'phasing' effect on the sound to a fast wobble that makes music sound like it was recorded underwater. Piano music shows up this fault better than any other, the effect being caused by slow or rapid variations in tape speed 'wow' is slow, 'flutter' is fast. In actual fact, wow is more associated with record players than cassette decks and it would have to be an extremely tight feed spool indeed to cause this in a tape deck. Flutter, however, is all too common and can be due to a number of causes, especially after a tangling session. First of all, take a look at the pinch roller — are there any bits of chewed-up tape caught up in it? If not, press PLAY and then PAUSE so that the pinch roller can be got at, but not in contact with the capstan, then try to spin it with your finger. If it feels stiff then there must be something jammed in it somewhere, possibly underneath where you can't see.

Careful manipulation with a pin and a pair of tweezers should remove any visible bits but it's a strip-down job if you can't get at 'em all through the flap and, unless you are totally confident that you can get everything back where it belongs, I'd leave it to a service engineer. Other causes of flutter, unfortunately irreparable by you, are a mis-shapen pinch roller, usually caused by leaving the PLAY button pressed down for long periods without the machine being used, and a bent (expensive!) capstan caused by rough handling or an over-zealous use of the screwdriver after a tangling session — so be warned!

TICK, TICK, TICK . . .

Some recorders (including the 464 one) have an auto-stop mechanism worked by a lever. Looking at fig.1, when the feed spool stops at tape-end the pinch roller/capstan continues to try and pull tape through, resulting in the tape going taut between the heads. This pushes back the auto-stop lever which in turn moves another lever into the path of the actuating pin on the flywheel (fig 2); the pin hits the lever which delatches the PLAY key on the deck thus stopping the tape. When you hear a ticking noise coming from the interior what is normally happening, again through stiffness in the tape, is that the levers are going slightly into the path of the flywheel pin but not enough to cause the delatching action, with the pin hitting the lever on each rotation. If you want a demo of this, start your machine playing with no cassette in it and the flap open then ever-so-slowly push back on the auto-stop lever. As you push, you will hear the ticking and then, as you go further, the lever will 'catch' and flick up the key. Very occasionally the weak spring that keeps the lever pushed out against normal tape tension will fail and give you this problem, but this again will need a strip down job to rectify.

AND FINALLY . . .

A cassette recorder depends upon friction, usually between various rubber belts and pulleys, for its rotary drives and mechanical operation in general so on no account — ie, NEVER — bring any kind of oil anywhere near a faulty deck in the mis taken notion that it might free orlubricate the mechanism. Believe me, I have tried to rectify more than a few machines so treated and they were all eventual write-offs.



LETTERTECH

This month Gary Liddon casts an eye over some of the technical letters received during the month, and answers the various queries, complaints and puzzles. If you would like to contribute thoughts relating to the AMTECH section of AMTIX!, whether it be comments on articles published or thoughts on products available, or if you have any problems using any hardware or software, write to AMTECH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.

ON GETTING A 464

Dear Sir,
I am presently taking a Higher National Diploma in Computer Studies and require a Computer to help me in my studies. After looking at quite a few, I have so far decided upon the Amstrad CPC464. But before purchasing it, I hope that you can tell me whether I can buy Cobol and Pascal compilers for the machine, (preferably Cobol) and a list of any advantages it has over the other forerunners.
Peter Witter, Dean, Bolton

Firstly, Peter, may I be so bold as to suggest that you buy an Amstrad 6128. If you intend to use the computer in the way you have indicated, you will need at least one disk drive, in which case the 6128 works out cheaper.

You can get both Pascal and Cobol, but none of them are cheap. Hisoft market a very good implementation of the language which sells for £39.95. Digital Research have now started selling their Pascal MT for the Amstrad, this package would have cost you £200 a few months ago but now it's down to £50. Not being a Pascal expert I can't speak for any particular package.

Cobol is a little bit more difficult since, as far as I am aware, no one markets a version specially for the Amstrad. Having said that, there are a number of CP/M packages on the market. The prices range from £750 for the Microsoft version, to £39.95 for Nevada COBOL. For details of these you will have to get in touch with Newstar Software in Brentwood (0277-220573), they will be able to advise you and ultimately put the software onto 3" disks.

WHAT PRINTERS ARE AVAILABLE FOR 464?

Dear Amtech,
I am writing to ask if you can list the printers that are available for my CPC464? I've seen the ones advertised in your magazine but being low on funds I'm looking for a cheaper one.
Paul Adams, Holgate Drive, Sheffield

Amstrad themselves produce quite a passable little letter churner by the name of DMP 2000. At only £156 the capabilities provided really are quite impressive. If, however, you want something a bit more upmarket, given the correct lead, any centronics type printer will fit onto your Straddles. There may be some restrictions though since only seven bits are allowed for data on the Amstrad's printer port. Most printers use escape codes to get characters 128—255 but if it is a particular problem then KDS do an 8 bit printer port for a mere £19.95 including postage and packing.

GAMES WANTED FOR 8256

Dear Sir,
Like so many, I was unfortunate enough to buy a VIC 20 when the price was at its highest and unaware of its limited capability.

Now I am on the lookout for a machine that will satisfy the children's needs for a good games machine and mine for small business use. The PCW 8256 seems to fit the bill but being cautious I am trying to find out what is available for it as well as what it can do.

Despite the letter from K Jenkins (issue 4) which prompted you to say you would indicate when a game was incompatible across the range most games reviewed in that issue did not have an indication. Indeed those with any indication say 'machine all'. Am I to take it for granted that this includes the 8256?

Might I suggest your magazine includes a summary of software available for the Amstrad reading something like this: Software name, type (disk/tape), price, machine, requirements (joystick/keyboard/mouse etc), and also includes details of when it was reviewed in the magazine, if at all. This should aid software sales as well as sales of back issues of AMTIX! and give the user better indication of what can, and can not, be used on their particular machine.
K J Williams, Rainford, St Helens, Merseyside.

Since the 8256 was tailored exclusively for word processing it's an awfully difficult thing to get any 464/664/6128 games up and running on it. All of the arcade games reviewed to date in AMTIX! are sadly incompatible with the Joyce. There's a lot of things useless on a word processor but handy on a games machine that the Joyce lacks to keep the price low. Most notable exclusion is that of a proper graphics chip: only the equivalent of mode 2 is available. Text adventures are still possible and the excellent *Infocom* range is available from Softsell. As for the software list, well it would take an awful lot of time to get to grips with a task as awesome as that and the already much overworked, underpaid (etc. etc.) AMTIX workforce would most certainly pall at the idea of such a list in EVERY issue. It may be possible do a special feature including such a list in the future though.

MODEM MONOPOLY

Dear Sir,
I am writing to you to voice my opinion over an apparent monopolisation and consequent increase in the price of modems for the Amstrad 6128. When I moved up to this computer I intended to buy a modem to continue my interest in bulletin boards. The *Magic Modem* was advertised as a complete package for under £100. With the well reviewed **Honeysoft** software included, it seemed too good an offer to miss so I rang **Datastar Systems** to be told after several calls that they were in dispute with Honeysoft over the price. It was indicated that Honeysoft had upped the price on Datastar who had now dropped plans for an Amstrad interface but would willingly supply a modem.

So I rang Honeysoft who said they had sold exclusive rights to **Pace** and dropped all plans for an autodial/answer option, as the **Pace Nightingale** does not require it. Comparing prices (Pace £136, Magic Modem £79 inc VAT) I thought maybe I could buy the *Magic Modem* and the Honeysoft interface and software to run it. I was assured the connections were the same and offered the RS232 board for £29.95 and the ROM board for £18.35. And the software to run it? Oh no, only Pace could supply that and oh yes, the boards are bare with no connector. I would have to solder that on myself. Bit dicey, I thought, so I rang Pace. Now a quick look at their advert shows a modem price of £119 excluding VAT, and an all-in package of £150 excluding VAT. Simple subtraction says that leaves £31, the obvious price of the interface and software. OK one can expect a slight mark up as I was not buying their modem. On getting through to them they suddenly announced their coup. 'Yes we have exclusive rights to Honeysoft, well actually it is two programs, *Scroll* and *View Data*, and we call it **Commstar**.'

Well, I enquired, can I buy your interface and software on its own? Certainly, they said, just hang on a minute please while we get the price list (more worries about my phone bill), then after five minutes he came back to remind me of (or was it gloat over) the joys of monopoly. He said he felt sure I understood the overall price was reduced as a package — so carefully, I gave a neutral grunt. Then came the bombshell from the man with the four aces. He said the price was £89. I have to admit I did not even bother to ask if the price included VAT although I am sure it didn't!
Kevin Trew, Creden Hill, Hereford

Looking at your problem it seems best for you to buy the Honeysoft ROM and RS232 boards and then all you need are the two 16K EPROMS that make up the Commstar package. The price of these, according to Pace, is £34.55 (not including carriage but with VAT). Once all this equipment is in your possession you will be free to sail the binary sea of bulletin boards.

TAPE TRANSFERRED GAMES WILL NOT RUN

Dear Amtech,
I am writing to ask for your help in persuading some tape-based games that I have transferred to disk to run. The games in question are *Alien 8*, *Dun Darach*, and *Marsport*, as all of them revert to the tape system when the first program is loaded. I would be grateful if you could supply me with listings to run these programs. By the way

congrats on a brilliant magazine, keep up the good work.
David M Drysdale, Stockton, Middlesborough

What needs to be done is for you to change the loader programs but they're probably protected. There is a way of getting around it, as there is with all protection, but printing such routines within a public magazine is a bit dubious. People may well put such code to mischievous uses. The only real help we can give is to suggest you get on to the people who supplied your tape—disk transfer program and ask their advice.

ADVICE PLEASE FOR MY 6128

Dear Amtech,
Thanks for AMTIX! but it was never like this when I was a boy. Two bits of advice please: 1: Joysticks: how do I choose the best for my (wife's) 6128? Performance is more important than price. 2: What club allows members to buy the DMP 2000 at £136? Can I join? See Page 83 AMTIX! no 4.
Chris Lindop, Chesham, Bucks.

Joystick selection really is down to the person though a firm office favourite seems to be the Euromax Competition Pro available for £16.95 from Euromax Electronics Limited, Pinfold Lane Industrial Estate, Bridlington, North Humberside. Amstrad's own user club is the organisation you seek in your second query and a call on 0277 230222 to Amstrad should be able to solve any enquiries you may have about that.

MOANS ABOUT THE DMP 2000 PRINTER

Dear Sir,
Having acquired a 6128 and DMP 2000 printer just before Christmas, I expected that your February article on the printer would reflect some of the problems I have had. Whilst I agree with many of your praises and overall consider it good, may I dwell on the demerits as you dwelt solely on the merits.

Firstly the ribbons. The one that came with the machine was faint to begin with and faded further to illegibility after a few dozen sheets. And now I cannot get one from my dealer, and Amsoft Order Action Line have not acted upon my urgent telephone order for over four weeks. The price quoted the ribbon at about £5, which seems excessive for two bits of plastic and two feet of ribbon that do not last.

I got the printer for its international character set but the instructions are so arcane that an expert I have consulted could not understand it. Theoretically, if I apply the manual program slavishly it should work - but it will not for me. I have not dared look at the (for me) even more unintelligible graphics instructions. Latin is easier. The label on the smart tinted lid unnecessarily hides the left hand single sheet paper guide, and the lid has to be raised or left off. Your photograph of the output is deceptive: the reduced size hides how clearly the dots can be seen. The NLQ is probably as 'near' as one can expect for the price: how far is near? The NLQ face has oddities such as a lower case i with it's dot on a level with the non-risers, an 's' like a backwards 'z', the 'p', 'b' and 'd' with their circles smaller than an 'o'. I prefer the standard typeface. You exaggerate needlessly to say it has over 130 styles by including double strike and underlining. To say it has six distinct faces shows it is more versatile than a typewriter. In short, I do not regret my purchase, and agree that it's a good deal indeed but I am aware of its limitations, even when I do get a spare ribbon.
Brian R Bishop, Leigh-On-Sea, Essex

True that the printer does have its drawbacks but what printer in a similar price range doesn't? Compare this bit of kit with many other centronics machines up to around twice the price and you would be hard put to find one that's superior. As for your gripes with NLQ mode, well they seem fair but the article also points out that better fonts are available. There does seem to be a feeling that NLQ is the latest hip thing to have on a dot matrix printer, even if it's not overly useful. At the moment ribbons are not easy to find and it's probably because of the demand. In fact, at the moment it's far from easy to pick up a DMP 2000 because of its popularity.

I WANT A SPEECH SYNTHESISER

Dear Great Ones at Lettertech,
I got the amazing 6128 for Christmas and since then I've been looking for peripherals. One that interested me was the SSA1 speech synthesiser. But, having looked around, certain shops say its compatible with the 6128 and others say it isn't. Can you help me? Keep producing your work of art.
Christopher Smith, Bushey Heath, Herts

Though the SSA1 is compatible with the 6128 unfortunately you won't be able to plug it in if you bought one. Since the module was originally designed for the 464 it overlaps where the 6128's disk drive power lead plugs in. A bit silly that. If you are willing to take the trouble to make up a 24 way ribbon cable lead to extend the user port then this should solve your problem. However this can be a bit tricky and by the time you read this DK'Tronics should have released their 6128 compatible speech synth with ROM based software.

FAT JOYCE IS UNVEILED BY AMSTRAD

The immense success of the PCW8256, launched in August last year, has prompted Amstrad to launch the PCW8512 — a range extension model with a price tag of £499 plus VAT, a machine that makes the 8256 positively anorexic.

SUPERNEWS FOR THE JOYCE

Bubble Bus Software has made its successful *Moonstrip Supernews* program available for the PCW8256. This well tested and much used Newsagents' program will print out rounds lists, holiday stops and starts, special stops on TV and Radio Times, print statements, and morning and evening rounds. Price changes can be handled in seconds, weekly or monthly accounts, wholesalers orders, and debtors listings. It handles 600 accounts per disk, 400 publications.

This gives computing power at an affordable price and is usable either on a counter or in an office on a small compact machine. The recommended price is £190 plus VAT.

Bubble Bus are expanding their programming team and have recently taken on two new young men, **Paul Midcalf** and **Simon Jones**. They are the authors of the company's latest game, **Deathsville**, a land where only the dead live and where they seek vengeance upon the living.

MELBOURNE DRAW

Last month in his run down on the art utility, **MELBOURNE DRAW, we stated that Robin Candy would be presenting some of his work. Unfortunately, due to the pressures of school work and the fact that he is still working on the drawings, we are unable to show any of the pictures this month.**



AMSTRAD LEARNING SOFTWARE

In their *Usborne Computer Books* Usborne have published an outstanding range of books which are readable by anyone with an interest in computing. They set out to explain the intricacies of microelectronics in such a clear way that the books can be picked up for an enjoyable read which is encouraged by colourful illustrations and lively cartoon characters who make their appearance to make a point. Early books in the series contained listings for the most popular home computers — before the Amstrad CPC 464 appeared — so if you are keen on typing in listings you might have to make a few changes to the short programs in the books but nevertheless they are well worth a look at.

Expanding your Micro

Expanding Your Micro is a beginners guide to computer add-ons and interfaces and deals with most of the queries that the average computer owner is likely to have when thinking about buying a disk-drive or printer — the most popular add-ons. Within its 48 pages the book manages to deal with:— differing plug connections, parallel and serial interfaces, joysticks, track balls and the 'mouse', light pens, modems and user ports. A good book to help cut through some of the computer jargon that might be thrown at novices by a less than helpful computer salesman.

Indications are that this year will be a notable year for serious applications for home micros and it is not unusual for young children to become involved with word processors at school. The first serious program considered for any home computer is usually a word processing package of some sort — particularly as the price of computer printers is starting to fall and all current computer models have a typewriter style keyboard with moving keys. Touch — surface and rubber keyed micros are now products of a by-gone age.

Those who argue that the traditional, 'QWERTY' typewriter keyboard was not designed for the age of computing and is inefficient are probably right — but its use is widespread and we must cope with it for some time yet. In their usual helpful way Usborne have produced a book which not only takes some of the mystery out of the terms that you are likely to meet when learning to use a typewriter or when exploring a word processor, but turns the exploration itself into an enjoyable activity.

The Usborne Introduction to Word processing & typing

Within its 49 colourful pages *Introduction to Word Processing and Typing* contains a vast amount of information all clearly explained and beautifully illustrated. From the uses and advantages of word processing to the different kinds of printer — daisy wheel, dot matrix, thermal, ink jet and laser beam the treatment is thorough. There is also a section dealing with cassette recorders and disk drives as many beginners will start their word processing chained to a tape recorder. The section on 'Shaping your text' (formatting) deals with margins, tabs, line spacing, pitch (the number of characters per inch) and with embedded print commands.

There are puzzles and practice pages and exercises to help speed up typing and many will find the advice on choosing a printer valuable. There is advice on looking after your hardware and, thoughtfully, the authors have included advice on how to help avoid aching muscles and eye strain.

At the end of the book are two buyer's guides — the software guide is useful as it lists the features of twenty word processing packages and indicates on which micros they will run. The 'Dedicated Word Processor Buyer's Guide' lists the features of the most commonly used makes of dedicated word processors used by large business concerns. This conjures up wonderful images of business tycoons flicking through the pages of the *Usborne Introduction to Word processing* under their executive desks — actually, they could do a lot worse.

The Usborne Introduction to Word Processing & Typing £2.50
Expanding Your Micro £2.25
Published by **Usborne Books** and widely available from good bookshops.

Pan Course Tutor-Mathematics

Secondary School Students taking external examinations this year (G.C.E. O-Level /C.S.E.) possibly after a disrupted school year could be looking to their Amstrad to offer a little help with some of the swotting. There are many Revision packages available ranging from straightforward electronic versions of textbooks (but not nearly as useful) to well thought out revision and diagnostic aids.

The Pan Maths Course Tutor is one of the better programs offering an integrated course combining well written computer software with an equally well written book of Maths Revision notes. Although titled a study and revision pack for 'O' level the course should be useful for anyone who wants to revise their knowledge of mathematics. In addition to the 220 page Maths Study Aid there is a guide to help students plan their revision which includes diagnostic tests to help pinpoint areas needing revision.

The computer program is on two tapes and is made up of six modules sub-divided into thirty sections, each module has a test and analysis section which will be timed by your Amstrad. The modules deal with :- Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry and Trigonometry, Graphs, Probability and Statistics, Matrices and Transformation. The Geometry and Trigonometry module loads in eight minutes and presents a display divided into three with a labelled diagram across the top half of the screen, the bottom left quarter is used to describe and set the problem and the bottom right quarter is reserved for 'hints' and advice which only appear when needed. If you succeed in solving the problem at your first attempt the computer will go on to another question, if your solution is incorrect you will be given a second opportunity and if this too is incorrect, advice will be given on screen. Advice can be given in several ways:— in the form of a mathematical equation, the correct answer — or a page reference to the author's accompanying Maths Study Aid Book. At the end of each module the computer displays the number of correct answers reached without using the advice option and suggestions for further work.

The page references in the program make the Study Guide Book essential to get full use out of the software and the course is designed to be a integrated unit. The Study Aid does not replace the teacher and it does suppose some prior knowledge, used intelligently it acts as a tutor and is a well thought out contribution to computer assisted learning.

Pan Course Tutors - Mathematics is published by **Hill MacGibbon** and **Pan Books** at £14.95 (tape). For the Amstrad CPC range.

Magic

Magic is published by **Macmillan Software** in their Professional Touch series which combines a booklet with software in each pack. The aim of the series is to both instruct and entertain and the first titles deal with the leisure interests of young people. The 32 page booklet which accompanies the software in *Magic* is introduced by the secretary of the Magic Circle, it deals briefly with the history of magic and then goes on to teach a number of simple tricks each requiring no more than a little preparation and some practice. The booklet is attractive, easy to read and understand, and is full of hints — the last page contains advice on using the software. After loading you are first asked for a password to prevent others from seeing the secrets of your magic and then invited to enter your stage name.

The first menu has the options:— 'Tricks', 'Options' or 'Show'. 'Tricks' will list nine items of magic stored in the computers memory, 'Sequence' will allow you to put them in any order you wish and 'Show' is for the actual performance with an audience. A secondary menu offers 'Magic', 'Magician's Tips' and 'Rehearsal', these describe the tricks explaining how they are done by scrolling messages across the screen and the 'Rehearsal' option allows you to practise them.

Screen displays are attractive with flickering candle footlights and stage curtains which are drawn back before you begin your 'act'. You can have musical accompaniment between magic shows. With a little practice the computer can take on the role of an electronic assistant which adds a touch of novelty to your magic show. Although the tricks are not spectacular and could be learned from a book many young people will find this use for the computer much more absorbing.

Magic is published by **Macmillan** for the Amstrad CPC range at £8.95

DAVID PAUL


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TOMAHAWK – a stunningly realistic flight simulation that puts you in command of an Apache Advanced Attack helicopter. Flying low over a spectacular 3D real world display with over 7000 ground features – TOMAHAWK puts you in the hot seat.
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PROTEXT

FOR AMSTRAD 464/664, 6128

THE ULTIMATE AMSTRAD WORD PROCESSOR!!

PROTEXT is without doubt the most sophisticated word processor you will find on any home micro. It is of comparable standard to business packages costing over £200 but has been developed for the AMSTRAD 464/664 and 6128 machines and is 100% machine-code. We know that PROTEXT is the fastest program of its type currently available (eg global search and replace on a three page file in under a second!). Bearing in mind the range of features included and their ease of use, this package is rightly acclaimed as the No. 1 word processor for Amstrad owners. Compare these features and benchmarks with any other similar products.

PROTEXT FEATURE SUMMARY

File commands – Super fast Load, Merge and Save, Cat, Print (to printer/screen/file).
Cursor Movement – By character/word/line/paragraph/screen, to start or end of line, to start or end of text, to line number, to place marker, to margin.
Inserting and deleting – Insert/overwrite mode, insert character or line, delete character forwards or backwards, delete word.
FIND and REPLACE – Wildcards, all or part of text, case specific, whole word or part of word, find control codes.
Block commands – Move/copy/delete/save/print/format.
Markers – 2 block markers and 10 place markers may be set anywhere.
Formatting – Word wrap, right justify, variable left and right margins.
Ruler lines – Unlimited number of ruler lines to define margins and tabs.
Print options – Headers/footers, page numbers, variable line spacing, variable page length and margin sizes, conditional page throws, odd and even page features, continuous or single sheets, multiple copies.
Printer features – Including emphasised, condensed, double-strike, elite, italics, enlarged, pica, NLQ, subscript, superscript, underline. Built in Epson printer driver. Ability to easily define your own printer driver and save to disc.
Help features – Optional on screen command summaries.
Built in character sets – Danish/French/German/Italian/Spanish/Swedish.
Other features – Non break space, display tabs, returns and hard spaces, soft hyphens, word count, case conversion, copy ruler. 40 page easy to read manual with full index and glossary of terms.

BENCHTESTS

A standard file of 775 words (4,785 characters) was used to carry out the following benchtests (all timings are in seconds):

	PROTEXT	TASWORD/AMSWORD
1 LOAD text file	4.7	10.2
2 SAVE text file	4.9	18.9
3 Re-FORMAT paragraph (85 words)	0.4	15.3
4 Re-FORMAT entire text	2.5	Not Possible
5 Move directly to start of text	under 0.1	2.2
6 Move directly to end of text	0.2	2.2
7 REPLACE 'the' with 'THE' (45 occurances)	1.7	34.1
8 SCAN entire text	2.2	7.2
9 MERGE file to centre of text	4.0	Not Possible
10 MERGE file to end of text	3.8	12.4
11 MOVE 85-word paragraph	under 0.1	6.8
12 PROGRAM LOAD TIME DISC / ROM	12.9 / Instant	14.6 / Not Available

"I AM STUNNED AT PROTEXT — IT KNOCKS POCKET WORDSTAR INTO A COCKED HAT" — AMTIX ISSUE 1 "DON'T MISS IT. IT IS SUPERB" — POPULAR COMPUTING WEEKLY
"MILES AHEAD OF THE AMSWORD TYPE PROGRAMS" — AMSTRAD USER

NOW TWO POWERFUL NEW ADDITIONS TO YOUR WORD PROCESSING SYSTEM:-

PROSPELL

* Checks your Spelling *
* Proof reads your documents *
* Solves your word puzzles *

— How to use PROSPELL —

The Spelling Checker can be called directly from within PROTEXT to check the current file in memory or any file on disc. Alternatively, PROSPELL will check any ASCII file produced by other Amstrad word processors, including Wordstar type files.

— Features available —

Add words to the dictionary/Correct word/Ignore word/Look up correct spelling/View word in context/Delete words/List words/Initialise new dictionary ... PLUS ...

— Word Puzzle Features —

The 30,000 word Dictionary can be used in a number of useful ways.

FIND WORD — You can enter a word pattern using ? for an unknown letter and * for a group of unknown letters. PROSPELL will list all words in the dictionary which match this pattern.

ANAGRAMS — PROSPELL will even list all anagrams of any word pattern you type in.

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Prices include dictionary on disc.
PROSPELL requires at least one disc drive.

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This major addition to the PROTEXT word processor combines a fully flexible mail merge program allowing PROTEXT to produce individualised documents in one single print run.

(a) COMPREHENSIVE MAIL MERGE

Read data from file or keyboard.
Merged fields of varying lengths are automatically reformatted.
File merge — insert file while printing.
Conditional printing — select from input data (eg you could print letters to all customers whose name is not Smith).
PROMERGE (Disc) £24.95

(b) PROTEXT EXHANCEMENTS (ROM version only)

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Two file editing — switch between two files in memory.
Cut and paste — any block of text can be moved to any position - allows multiple column layout.
Auto configuration — you can set up a disc to configure PROTEXT to your preferred options with a single keystroke.
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*** 6128 OWNERS ***

These features make full and sensible use of your extra 64K memory but also function with smaller files on the 464 and 664 machines.
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Now recognised as the industry standard assembler/monitor/editor. Used by all the leading software houses, computing magazines and widely used throughout industry.

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Why make machine-code difficult?
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PROTEXT and **MAXAM** are available on cassette, disc, rom and plug-in cartridge.

CASSETTE AND DISC
The inexpensive introduction to the Arnor professional software.
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For those people who already own a rom expansion box. Just plug in a rom and off you go. Arnor roms are compatible with all other rom boxes.
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Complete Plug-in-and-go ROM cartridge containing either PROTEXT or MAXAM. NO ROM BOXES REQUIRED! In addition, the cartridge has a thorough connector for further peripherals and an extra socket for expanding the system with our own 4 way rom board. The AD2 cartridge plugs directly into the 464, 664 or 6128, fitting snugly into the expansion port. Fitting a PROTEXT cartridge means that as soon as you switch your Amstrad computer on, PROTEXT is instantly ready and waiting for you to use.

Consider the price of our cartridge system. Just £10 onto the price of the rom software and no extra hardware required. Why pay twice as much to get started?

AD2 cartridge (PROTEXT or MAXAM) with no extra hardware required £49.95
4 WAY ROM CARD (plugs into cartridge) £15.95

REMEMBER ... ROM and cartridge software gives you a massive 40K text space!!

ADVANCED AMSTRAD CPC6128 COMPUTING

by Ian Sinclair, £9.95,Collins

Until recently it was taken for granted that the buyer of a home computer would know very little about the machine or its programming language. Now small computers have evolved to the stage of the Amstrad CPC6128, however, the buyer can be expected to have some experience and it is for these buyers that this book has been written.

Although the manual for this computer is good as a reference book the user, normally, prefers to be introduced to topics in a suitable order and to know which are most likely to be important initially. There will always be a few first-time computer owners eager to know how to get the best out of a new machine, and since the BASIC programming language of the CPC6128 has so much in common with that of the older CPC464 it would probably be a good idea to have a look at the author's first book, *Amstrad Computing with the CPC464*, before delving into this one.

This book deals in the main with the differences between the earlier Amstrad models and the CPC6128 and with the more advanced commands that can now be used. There are many differences, and several of them are very significant indeed. One major difference is the use of an upgraded operating system, CP/M Plus, which is custom built for this machine. This is different from the older CP/M 2.2 that was used on the disk version of the CPC464 and is a much better system for the CP/M user who is not so dedicated. In fact it may help stem the flood of Amstrad owners joining the CP/M User Group in search of help!

Another major change has been the provision of extra RAM, making a new total of 128K. This extra memory is not a way of squeezing in longer programs in BASIC, though it offers some more memory for CP/M programs, but it can be used both for graphics and as a form of random access filing system. Details of the use of the extra memory is dealt with in the book along with some illustrative programs. The graphics instructions of the previous machine have been retained, but with useful improvements which make for much easier programming of graphics from BASIC. The speed of the Locomotive BASIC is such that there is little point in going to machine code for many actions, but if you are curious, then another book by the author, entitled *Introducing Amstrad Machine Code*, originally written for the CPC464 but also applicable to the CPC6128, will be of interest to you.

Ian Sinclair assumes the reader knows how to program in BASIC and has a reasonable knowledge of computing terms. The topics in this book take over from there, introducing the reader to the use of the disk systems, both AMSDOS and CP/M Plus, to disk filing techniques, more advanced graphics and sound, the use of extra memory, and to various hints and tips which make programming, and the use of the Amstrad 6128 easier and more effective.

Malcolm Harding

PROGRAMMING THE REAL WORLD

By Marcus Watney, £9.95, Century Communications,

Many computer books have the bad habit of publishing long listings accompanied by only a single page of explanation, on the assumption, more often than not, that the underlying logic is as clear to the reader as it is to the author. In order to avoid this trap author, Marcus Watney, has devoted a considerable amount of his book explaining how each program functions so the reader can extract the fundamental principles for use in his own home-grown software.

Although the listings in this book have been prepared for use with the Sinclair Spectrum because the algorithms are described in detail and because every variable is defined, there should be no difficulty converting the software to run on Amstrad machines.

To make it easier the demonstration programs have been divided up into manageable chunks. After each chapter, additional program lines are provided to illustrate the text and these are then edited into the existing program using the MERGE facility. Readers can therefore expand each program as much or as little as they want, and are not distracted by those program lines whose purpose have yet to be revealed.

On a cassette tape (for Spectrum only) which is also available from the publisher all programs have already been MERGEd and are ready to run. They are purposely unprotected and do not auto-run,permitting immediate access to the listings.

As for ancillary hardware, joysticks are not needed or even encouraged but use is made of the printer. Nothing absolutely vital is ever sent solely to the printer, so those without one may still use and enjoy the programs. Yet the hard copy often carries details which are not displayed on screen but which illuminate the workings of the program effectively.

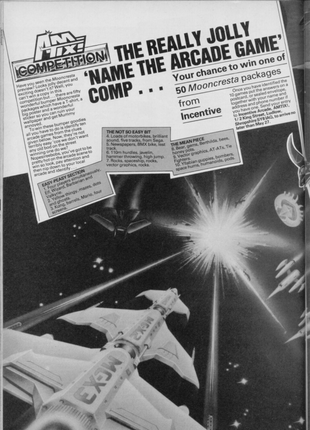
In the book's introduction author, Watney explains what the listings do not include. 'In preparing them', he says 'my prime consideration was not speed or sophistication but ease of comprehension. Subroutines and initial conditions have been placed without regard to speed of execution, and long but meaningful variable names have been used freely. The use of a number of self-inflicted constraints mean the programs run much more slowly than some people may wish. But my reasoning is that more sophisticated readers will find no difficulty in editing the programs to run faster; my first responsibility is to the less experienced reader, for whom understanding the listing in the first place is the major challenge.'

Commenting on the level of mathematics employed Marcus states he has deliberately refrained from any use of matrices and their transformations although in many cases their use would have greatly simplified the program. The scalar ('dot') product and the vector ('cross') product will not be found in the book and differential calculus is not used until the last two chapters. All that is required is a knowledge of trigonometry. Although some of the topics rightly belong in the A level category or higher their implementation involves mathematics which are accessible to the O level student. As for the physical principles applied these are summarised in the final appendix.

The book only gives a glimpse of the fascinating hobby of designing computer models; to get the most from it you must be willing to strike out on your own, applying the principles contained in the book to your own projects. To help you achieve this a lot of useful data is provided in a number of tables.If you lack a specific parameter it can almost certainly be found in the technical section of your local library. While the book and the tape are protected by the copyright laws in the standard way the reader is encouraged to edit and experiment with the programs for their own amusement as much as they wish.

The book is divided into four main sections. Section A tells the reader how to program real ball games; the next section deals with flight simulators; section C discusses the solar system and tells you how to simulate satellites while the fourth section discusses momentum on a space voyage and debates the possibilities of beyond the speed of light. The appendices lists flags and variables used in the various sections and also gives a summary of physical principles used in the book.

Malcolm Harding


AMTIX! COMPETITION
THE REALLY JOLLY 'NAME THE ARCADE GAME' COMP . . .
Your chance to win one of 50 Mooncresta packages from Incentive
Have you seen the Mooncresta preview? Looks jolly decent and exciting doesn't it? Well, you can't win a copy in this competition but . . . there are fifty wonderful bumper Mooncresta packages which have a T-shirt, a big poster and a wonderful sticker so you can ruin your wallpaper and get Mummy annoyed.
To win these bumper goodies all you have to do is identify ten arcade games from the clues given below. Now, they're not terribly easy 'cos we don't want any old bod on the street winning one do we? Nopesireebobs, you've got to be pretty hot on the arcade scene to win so look, pay attention and then nip down to your local arcade and identify . . .
EASY-PEASY SECTION
1. Four players simultaneously, Elf, Wizard, Barbarian and Valkyrie.
2. Yellow thingy, mazes, dots and ghosts.
3. Kong, barrels, Mario, four screens.
THE NOT SO EASY BIT
4. Loads of motorbikes, brilliant sound, five tracks, from Sega.
5. Newspapers, BMX bike, test track.
6. 110m hurdles, javelin, hammer throwing, high jump.
7. Rocks, spaceship, rocks, vector graphics, rocks.
THE MEAN PIECE
8. Bear, gems, Berthilda, bees, honey pots.
9. Vector graphics, AT-ATs, Tie Fighters.
10. Yllabian guppies, bombers, space hums, humanoids, pods.
Once you have identified the 10 games put the answers on a postcard, or sealed envelope, together with your name and address and phone number if you have one. Send your entry to Incentive Arcade, AMTIX!, 1/2 King Street, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1AQ, to arrive no later than May 27.
MGX3



THINK OF A PRESENT FOR A DRAGON

Your chance to win a disk drive or 29 copies of the mind blowing game, THE EIDOLON

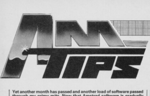
The Eidolon from **Activision**, which was previewed in the last edition of AMTIX!, is a literally mind searching game. You take on the role of an intrepid explorer as you journey the mazes of your own mind. What you may find there could possibly startle you a little as the mind appears to house seven different sections all of which lurk within a labyrinth of rock lined passages populated by wierd and wonderful wee beasties. Between each of the seven sections is a gate to the next. However, each portal is guarded by a dragon-like creature all of whom serve as a perversely over-enthusiastic bouncer and won't let you pass. The only way to get to the next section of your mind is to hurl a jewel at them, that you hopefully found in the previous section, to vaporise them.

Well, when we saw the game at AMTIX! towers we thought that the guardians' manner was very similar to that of our 'new broom sweeps clean' editor Malcolm, although his bristles are wearing down a little now, probably due to his age!! Anyway, when we want something from Malcolm we soften him up a bit with something that we know he likes — we offer to wheel his bathchair down to the local hostelry or re-varnish his walking stick. You know what I mean!!!

So, if you can think of a nice present for a crotchety old dragon that will soften him up enough so he will allow you past him even though you're wearing jeans and trainers, then pop a picture, model or description of it into the post, then cross your fingers and wait . . . If it's decided that you are the top person at the art of 'buttering up' and that you show more than a passing familiarity with the old Blarney then you will receive a super disk drive for your Ammy that will bring you into the wonderful world of instant access or duel driven computing courtesy of the yummy Kathy Leonard at **Activision**.

Lovely Kathy couldn't see anyone win a disk drive and have nothing to put in it so a disk version of the game will be included with it. Okay, so not everybody can win, and the clever Kathy knows this so she's throwing in 29 cassette versions of the game for the runners up. Right, everyone satisfied with that? Good. So just run off and search the dustiest recesses of your minds for a jolly pressy for a crotchy old dragon-otherwise known as Malcolm the editor-and send your idea, picture or model to

INSTANT ACCESS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SY8 1AQ to arrive here and annoy the local posties before May 27.



from Robin Candy

Yet another month has passed and another load of software passed through my grimy mits. Now that Amstrad software is gradually getting better what I want from you are more pokes and cheats. From next month I will give a handsome AMTIX! T-shirt to the person who comes up with either the most igenious pokes or cheats. In particular I want details on the missions in *Elite* and more tips for Martech's superb *Zoids*. Any tips on the excellent *Strangeloop* would be greatly appreciated. So now you know what I want from you, without further ado on with this month's tips.

DRAGONTORC

Now many months after starting the serialisation of the *Dragontorc* solution we have at last come to the final installment. Read on to find out how to destroy Morag and free Merlyn.

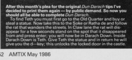
Beware of the Demon who takes away Maroc's ability to open doors. Use the **Mantle spell** to protect yourself and the **Missile spell** to destroy it. Demons can sometimes kill elves and vice versa. The way to Morag is past a room with a flashing imp in it — don't touch it otherwise you will be transported back outside the citadel. Lead the elves into the final complex. Try to destroy the skelebones and demons yourself because they might kill the elves. Find the pool to replenish your energy. Find the green key and put it on the floor, now put the **Lit Torch** near it and snakes will come out. Kill the snakes with the Torch. Now use **Undo** on the key and open the chest with it. Take the white key from the chest but leave the **Symbol** there for later. Unlock the locked door with the white key and lead the goblins away from Morag's protection so that the elves can deal with them. Beware of the invisible spider, kill him with the **Missile spell** or with an elf. Now you should be in Morag's room.

Here use the **Slow** or **Unseen spells**. Place the **Hand** on top of the **Crown** just above Morag's head. The Crown will drop down, take it along with the **Wand** and go left. Use **Bane** to kill the wraiths. Place the **Wand** on top of the **Fireball Generator** and it will turn to a door key. Take the door key.

Open the door to the snake room and kill all the snakes with the **Lit Torch**. In this room find a chest using the **Wand** and open it with the green key. Use the **Wand** to turn off the snakes and magic, now take the **Mindkey spell** from inside the chest. Take the **Wand**, **Crown** and **Pentagram Symbol** back to the room with the **Exit Cube** and the other **Pentagram Symbol**. Leave the Pentagram Symbol there. Open the next door with the **Mindkey spell**. Use the small yellow key from the invisible goblin room to open the chest but beware — axes fly out. Use the **Wand** to switch the axes off. Now take the **Pentagram Symbol** from inside the chest. Place one symbol on top of the cube and missiles fly out. Place another one on and the cube reappears. Go down the cube taking the **Crown**.

CAIRNDOOM

You will now be at Cairndoom which is the final set of locations. Open the doors with the **Mindkey spell**. Deal with the goblin, dwarf and demon guards using the **Missile spell** and **Warrior spell** then look for a room with a **Giant Stone** in it. Use **Mindkey** on this Stone and Merlyn is revealed. Now give Merlyn the last Crown to end the game.



DUN DARACH

After this month's plea for the original *Dun Darach* tips I've decided to print them again — by public demand. So now you should all be able to complete *Dun Darach*.

To find Teth you must first go to the Old Quarter and buy or steal a statue. Now take this to the Soke or Ratha de and follow the rat that wanders the streets. In Claw lane the rat will disappear for a few seconds stand on the spot that it disappeared from and press enter; you will now be in Darach Down. Inside Darach Down is Teth. Give Teth the statue and in return he will give you the d—key; this unlocks the locked door in the castle.

BRUCE LEE

Me 'ole mate and ZZAP! reviewing colleague, Gazza Penn (of almost appearing on Saturday Superstore fame) came up to me and asked if I would like an in depth report on how to play *Bruce Lee* from US Gold. Now knowing what such a good player Gazza is (any one who can get over 100, 000 on 'Stargate' is alright in my books) I accepted. Detailed below are Gary's findings

If like me you are totally ruthless when playing games you'll want to cheat at every opportunity. When the game loads there is a nice option screen. Plug in two joysticks and choose a one player vs opponent option. Pick up your joystick and play as normal, but put stick 2 on the floor and put your foot on it in such a way that the handle is always facing up. When you start the game, Yamo will be permanently jumping up and down and is rendered harmless, but the big advantage is the fact that you get five extra men! You must keep the second stick in this position all the time you play, otherwise the machine cottons on to your evil tricks and docks your men eventually, to use a second stick you can buy one of those fancy sticks that allows you to plug another one into it.

Anyway, get over your guilt complex and get playing. Golden rule number 1 is that you must collect every single accessible lantern in every screen, even though a door may open with some left. Don't take shortcuts — there are no time bonuses but masses of points available for hanging around beating up the Ninja.

If ever you're cornered, lie down until your adversary retracts his foot/bokken stick, then get up and punch. Yamo should ALWAYS be kicked because he'll kick you at first opportunity. Kicking the Ninja to death is sadistic but easy — but you'll have to run half a screen in all to do it, so the best thing to do is punch, wait half a second, punch, wait, punch. If your timing is right the Ninja won't ever be a problem.



HYPER SPORTS

Though not the most exciting game on the Amstrad it can be fun to play at times. Thanks to Alan Cowan **of** Glasgow **for these tips.**

In the swimming when the swimmers line up for the start you know that it is only about 3 — 5 seconds before the start of the race so be prepared. Once the race has started watch for when the first 'breath' sign appears in relation to the distance markers, after a while you will be able to anticipate when you must breathe and thus speed up your time by about a second or more. An alternative to this is to have someone else do the breathing for you.

The skeet shooting is quite a simple event. After a while you will learn the sequences in which the skeets appear and this will improve your shooting. Should you shoot all of the skeets a duck will fly past if you shoot this you will receive a hefty 5000 points bonus and the message Perfect.

The next event, the long horse, is also quite easy to master. Press fire as your man nears the end of the springboard, this will mean that you land quite near the end of the horse. Once on the horse wait until your character's legs are almost vertical then press fire again and waggle the joystick like mad. When nearing the ground press fire and pull left so that you land upright. Following these methods you should always qualify for this event.

In the Archery try get the wind as near to 0 as possible (a bit of practice at this and you should be able to get bang on 0 almost every time). Your first arrow should be spent on gauging when it is best to fire so that the arrow hits the bull. Get the angle between 4.8 and 5.2 degrees and a should get a 'NICE'.

Try to get a very high speed when running, in the Tripple Jump, and jump at a angle as close as possible to 45 degrees for each jump you have to make.

The weightlifting is probably the hardest event to do really well in, not because of the method but because of the physical demands. A really good joystick (like a Kempston) should be used otherwise it's better to use the keyboard and for your first attempts at weightlifting you should try the lighter weights just to make sure you qualify before trying the heavier weights. It is also advisable to have someone else to press the fire button when the barbell flashes.



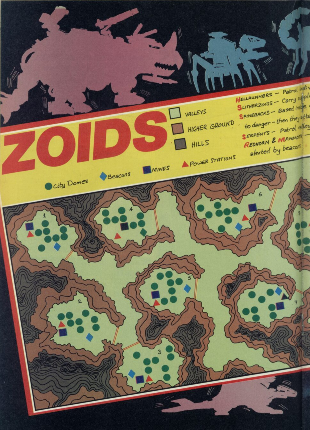
HACKER

Hacker, **the game of espionage from Activision, has attracted quite a few tips. Unfortunately due to the pressures of time I haven't got round to checking them out but hopefully they are all right. Thanks to** Patrick O' Sullivan **for these tips.**

1. Go to Paris and offer £5,000 cash for a part of a document and buy the Swiss chalet and the chronograph.
2. Go to Egypt and offer the chronograph and buy the Emerald scarab and the Golden statuette of Tut.
3. Go to Athens and offer the Golden statuette of Tut but don't bother buying anything.
4. Go to Russia and offer the Emerald scarab. Once again don't bother buying anything.
5. Go to New York and offer the Swiss chalet and only buy the stocks and bonds.
6. Go to Korea and offer the stocks and bonds. Buy the pearls and the camera.
7. Go to China and offer the Pearls. Buy the Jade carving.
8. Go to South America and offer the Jade carving. Don't buy anything.
9. Go to San Francisco and offer the camera. Buy the Beatles album. Don't bother buying anything.
10. You should now have all of the document. So take it to Washington DC to finish the game.

At various points in the game you will be asked questions by security as a check the answers are as follows:
Level 1. check — Magma, Ltd. (don't forget the comma and the full stop)
Level 2. check — AXD—0310479
Level 3. check — Hydraulic
Level 4. check — Australia

57


ZOIDS
VALLEYS
HIGHER GROUND
HILLS
City Domes
Beacons
MINES
POWER STATIONS
HELLRUNNERS — Patrol
SLITHERZOIDS — Carry
SPINEBACKS — Based
to danger — then they
SERPENTS — Patrol
REDHORN & MAMMOTH —
alerted by beacons
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8


l individual city networks
supplies around city networks
nside city domes unless alerted
y attack intruders
valleys looking for Blue Zoids
OTH – Roam valleys unless
ns Networks are numbered.
8
9
10
56

THREE WEEKS IN PARADISE

After last month's colourful map and tips here is the rest of the solution for you to goggle over. The tips come courtesy of AMTIX! reviewer Mark Peters.

To rescue Herbert

First of all get the **Deaux Sticks** from the crocodile room using the **Action key**, light the fire in the anvil room. Take the **Bellows** from the top of the well, then pass over the fire and press the **Action key**. Get the **Hot Ashes** and take them to the room with the Totem pole in it. Now pass over the white man and press the **Action key**. Should you have the **Bellows** the cloud will move away from you, so make sure you are standing to the right of it.

When the cloud reaches the hut collect the **Shell**. Now take the Shell down the well and press the **Action key** just as the drip touches. Once that has been done take the **Billy Can** to the Geyser, pull the rope, and run to the water to fill the can.

Go and find the **Flipflops** and take them along with the full **Billy Can** to the beach. Just as you pass the crab press the **Action key**. Now collect the **Claw** and take it to the right-hand side of the room that contains Herbert. Whilst keeping the **Action key** depressed walk into the lion. Take the **Thorn**, with this and the full **Sea Shell** walk to the middle of the cauldron and press the **Action key**—that's it.



ELITE (Firebird)

Kurt 'Deadly' Farmer of Southampton has found these tips for Firebird's excellent Elite. Take it away Kurt.

Firstly you need cash to get anywhere in *Elite* and the only two ways to do this is by trading or shooting Pirates. If you are a beginner you won't be able to kill many Pirates so you'll have to trade.

TRADING

The best trading route I have found so far is between **LAVE**, **LEESTI** and **DISO**. This is a good route because it's pretty safe for beginners and once you get going the cash really starts to flow.

Start at **LAVE** and take furs to **LEESTI**. At **LEESTI** take computers to **DISO** and from **DISO** take furs or food back to **LEESTI** (if the price is above sixty credits on furs take food instead). Don't bother going back to **LAVE** until you are more experienced.

EQUIPMENT

The best equipment to buy is listed below:

LARGE CARGO BAY. Now you can take more cargo on your runs from planet to planet.
BEAM LASERS. Pirate ships blow up much faster than they do with **PULSE LASERS** and saves all that messing around.
ECM SYSTEM. There is nothing worse than being destroyed by a rogue missile that you can't hit.
FUEL SCOOPS. A good investment as you can pick up cargo canisters left behind by any ships destroyed. You can also pick up fuel from the sun.
DOCKING COMPUTERS. Although you must be able to dock manually, this eases the worry of hitting the side of the space station and blowing yourself up. Lovely music too . . .
EXTRA ENERGY. Makes your energy charge up independently of your shields and recharges quicker than normal.
MILITARY LASERS. Get these as soon as possible as the enemy can be blown up very quickly and they're great fun to use. Also, you can't do the **CONSTRICTOR** mission unless you have these.
Other items of equipment can be bought at leisure.

When buying any of the above make sure you have enough credits left over to carry on trading.

(GENERAL TIPS)

- Don't trade in contraband!
- Energy Bombs don't work on Thargoids but they will destroy the smaller, remote controlled Thargons.
- Only trade in computers, furs and food.
- Don't go to Anarchy planets such as **RIEDQUAT** until you are competent with Military Lasers and an Iron Ass (!).
- When flying to a planet or sun the whole game seems to slow down so go to another view. The shields charge up quicker too.
- Every time you go into a new galaxy your legal status is restored to clean. So, after you have been into battle with the Vipers to increase your status, perform a Galactic Hyper-Space to the next galaxy where you will be clean again.

BOULDERDASH

These pokes from Michael Jampel and John Bray of London allow you to play on any level of the great game. Just type in this little routine and those bits you may never have seen will be yours.

```
MEMORY 5999
LOAD "Bolder.bin", 6000
POKE 12004, 1
POKE 11999, 20
SAVE "Bolder", b, 6000, 28709,
8018
RUN "Bolder", 512
```

**It looks as if I've filled up my allotted space, so it's goodbye time. The address to send in your tips is:
AMTIPS, AMTIX! MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.**

But make sure you put the AMTIX! MAGAZINE bit on because our sorting department get awfully annoyed when you don't put which magazine you wish your letter to go to, and when their tempers are up they are not a nice bunch of people to deal with. So make Pat 'n' Doreen's life easier and put the AMTIX! bit on, thanks.



IN QUIET DESPERATION

Owners of the PCW 8256 wordprocessor should be pleased to see that software support is growing in recreational areas as well as business applications. At the recent Manchester Amstrad Computer Show (see elsewhere in this issue) Interceptor Micros, from whom little has been heard recently, launched an upgraded version of their adventure *Heroes of Karn* especially for the 8256. Despite attempts to acquire one at the show, you may have to wait a while for a full review. In the mean time, 'those nice people from Global' came and bestowed many bijou giftettes (how did that phrase get in here?) upon me. They're all given the full treatment below. This was also the month of the Jampel, my 1/300th scale strategist. He brought tips and a map for *Red Moon* which the Arcana will feature next month.

But the rapidly approaching Easter break has left me little time for reviews so I hope there's enough to keep you going until next issue. Best to keep this bit brief. Be seeing you.

THE LOST PHIRIOUS PART ONE: THE CASIOPIA

Vidipix, £2.50, cass

This is actually the first part of a science fiction trilogy of Quilled adventures. No graphics accompany this game but there's a very pretty redefined character set (which has the added bonus of being readable!) and a liberal amount of humour. The main idea of the plot is that you are a futuristic Techno-scavenger searching for the fabled riches that lie in the derelict hull of the lost cargo ship *Phirious*. Having picked up some useful rumours that could have come straight out of *Twilight's Peak* (er— never mind), you have set course for Earth, the only lead in the puzzle.

On the journey, only a short way from Earth, you discover another derelict vessel, *Casiopia*. Being an interstellar Arthur Daley, you don't look a gift horse in the mouth. However, once the *Casiopia* has been successfully boarded, your own ship inexplicably blows up into a floating mass of debris. So you have two tasks. The immediate one is to find a way off the ship and down to Earth. After that, the hopefully intact *Phirious* must be found as second hand vessels still cost a fortune.

As it turns out, the transporter room on the *Casiopia* is faulty and this will haveto be repaired, the co-ordinates for Earth retrieved and off you should then go in a suitably futuristic puff of smoke. Easier said than done? Well, yes actually, it is.

The game is well thought out and the puzzles ought to keep you occupied for a while. In some ways, this game is a mini *Starcross* although both have their original finishing touches. The way the game addresses you provides some amusement (or at least it amused one of our younger reviewers who constantly sounded like a hyena on heat whenever she saw the responses). They range from 'What now thy mega brain' to 'you cannot do that my old goos gog'. People who have a habit of employing expletives are well catered for. A warning appears after the first offence but after that, any more offences and you're banished to the entrance to Hades where your only escape is to quit the game and begin again.

Descriptions are on the short side but still effective. A note in a book says that although it used to have all the operating instructions for the ship, the crew weren't interested and ripped them out for paper plane design. Another reference describes a utility robot as having a name plate with some of the letters missing. Players of a certain futuristic arcade adventure from the people who 'play the game' would recognise it.

The plot is about the weakest thing about the game. That and the fact that the ending is something of an anti-climax (probably because this is the first part of a trilogy) make the whole affair a little tame. There are inconsistencies that will annoy people who like water tight story lines. Why did your ship explode? In an interstellar society and so close to Earth, how come you can't hang around to be rescued? How come you're stark naked when you enter the abandoned vessel? Ah yes, I hadn't mentioned that. Well, here's a free tip — wear the fig leaf. Even if you find the suit — you still need to wear the fig leaf!

Really, for the price this is a most enjoyable text adventure albeit not a hard one to complete. Apparently the company behind the game has had a year's experience in producing games for the Dragon micro. Wisely, they have decided to spread their wings into the strong Amstrad market. However, the game could be improved. As quilled games go, this one isn't bad. But trilogies by any body other than the big software houses are not often

```
The smell of foul food indicates that
this is the INFAMOUS kitchen of the
Casiopia.This is known throughout the
Galaxy as being second only to the
Watford Gap service kitchen.
Exits are:N,S,W
I spy with your little eye:
A key

What next thy greatness?
>GET KEY
O.K.

What is your next command?
>
```

```
humans as there is a plaque enscribed:
A memorial to Percy Thrower".You can
feel someone is watching you.
Exits are:N,E,W
I spy with your little eye:
A fig leaf!

What is your next command?
>GET FIG
O.K.

What next thy greatness?
>WEAR FIG
O.K.

Tell me what to do thy mega brain.
>I
You possess:
A fig leaf!(worn)
A key

Give me thy command.
>
```



welcomed whole-heartedly by the public (though they do promise to have part two out before August this year). Secondly, the market has just about had its fill of quilled games and though worse programs are often written on better systems, anything associated with *The Quill* is beginning to have a dated feel about it. Finally, the packaging

needs to be improved a great deal. The cover was just on the right side of neat but it looked cheap and uninspiring.

This could be a good beginner's games, though it should prove worth the pennies for the more experienced how have a few bob to spare. With the other two parts of the game, it has the potential to be something quite special. Perhaps the three parts could be released as one, full price package. I hope the other two chapters fulfill the promise shown in this game.

Atmosphere 77%
Plot 53%
Interaction 62%
Value for money 72%
Overall 72%

THE BEER HUNTER

Global, £7.95, cass

This is the first commercially released adventure to have been designed with Incentive's highly aclaimed *Graphic Adventure Creator* system. The package is reasonable. The cassette comes in a medium sized box with a suitable cover picture, later repeated as the loading screen. The game itself is a satire on all those games depicting you as the ultimate hero, trying against all the odds to save the world. In this game, all you want to do is get a decent pint of beer for your thirst stricken throat.

Not such a demanding quest, you may have thought. However, you have to contend with the problems posed by trendy continental eating establishments, the ubiquitous Hooray Henrys with their XR4i's and plently more besides. The graphics are simplistic and occasionally repetetive but have a certain mood and character about them that adds to the game. Text descriptions don't suffer as a result either. If there is too much text to read at one go, a flashing cursor breaks the text scroll to the screen at a convenient point, only to be continued when the Shift key is pressed.

I was a little disappointed with the command handling. The author made little use of the advanced parser which stands out as one of *GAC*'s main features. However, input was well buffered allowing rapid movement around previously explored areas of the game.

In the time I played, I managed to finish just over fifty percent of

the game and I must say that this proved quite easy. I was allowed to carry anything that could be picked up without any regard to weight or bulk (another possible parameter with *GAC*). Still, the game was enjoyable as far as I got and whilst it didn't have me rolling across the office floor in hysterics, it did prove to be an interesting and amusing affair.

One of the features that made it so enjoyable was the well devised satire which the author put to good effect when describing the lager drinking Westenders with their appalling driving habits. At one point, I was walking down an alleyway when I was told that this was the only safe place from the Hooray types because it was too narrow for a car and they had to drive anywhere that was more than ten yards away. That sums up the level of wit in the game; subtle — may bring a smile to your face, but don't expect any gut-busting one liners to hit you out of the blue.

There were frustrating moments as well. The game's lack of being able to handle multiple direct objects made progress slow (until I got used to it) because there were few messages to tell you when something had *not* happened. Instead, the game would merely not say 'OK' after an input. Whilst I'm not the kind who desires a puzzle at every location, the tendency to include an entire location for the sake of a weak joke made me feel that some of the potential was wasted. An example of this was when I went 'up' from the car park to arrive on the roof of the pub. 'There's nothing here,' it said. 'You must be drunk'. Well, take it or leave it. Also (and I'm not sure whether this was deliberate) the directions from a location had no note of distance. While this isn't normally a problem whilst playing, in *The Beer Hunter*, several locations would have to be piled on top of each other in order to co-exist in the same area of space. Either that or the Earth's magnetic field is becoming wonderfully scrambled. Then again, it could just be to reflect the fact that you are getting drunk. Who can tell? (NB: rhetorical question).

At the end of the day, I must say that I enjoyed the game. It made a light hearted change from the norm whilst not being remarkably humourous nor particularly taxing. It was a shame that it could not have put *GAC* through its paces more, either. As it stands, the game could have been written on *The Quill* considering the interactive limitations. All in all, *The Beer Hunter* is worth the money but could have been better.

Atmosphere 81%
Plot 76%
Interaction 50%
Lastability 49%
Value or money 74%
Overall 76%

FOURMOST ADVENTURES

Global Software, £7.95, cass

This is a compilation of four adventure games as chosen for Global Software by adventure reviewer, Tony Bridges. Each of the games is given a separate mini-review below. Ratings pertinent to the individual game are given beneath each mini-review whilst those ratings more applicable to the compilation as a whole are given at the end.

RING OF DARKNESS

One thing's for certain — this game should never have appeared on the compilation. The reasons are twofold. First of all, it was Global's intention to have the CRASH Smash, *Out of the Shadows* specially converted for the Amstrad. This would have been an excellent choice. Sadly, that game may never appear because Global decided they could wait no longer for the conversion and selected *Ring Of Darkness* as a surrogate. The second reason why it shouldn't have appeared is because, frankly — it's awful.

The game is a semi-realtime graphic adventure where simple text and cursor inputs prompt a simple graphic character in his quest around a garishly coloured map for fame and fortune. Wandering through the wilderness leaves him open to attacks from all sorts of bandy legged baddies who waste no time in their attempts to waste him. Your character has a limited number of hit points but these must be set at an initially high level as during the time it has taken to write this paragraph, the little fellow has been attacked eight times by a bandit (who's beating him to a pulp at a rate of 12 points per turn) and he's still standing . . .

The map's colours are a combination of bright yellows, reds and greens . . . yeeugh! Green screen owners will find the presentation considerably more palatable. Movement is achieved via the cursor keys should you actually want to try. Actually, it's a good idea to get to a castle as soon as possible as life is a lot quieter in there. Moving to the stands therein will oprn up trade opportunities but beware of thieves and conmen — they 're everywhere.

The copy sent to me had the rather dreadful bug of allowing my character to walk through walls and tables. A chat with the folks at Global confirmed that this error has been eliminated on the release version. Even so, the graphics are very limited as is any interaction with other characters. Because of the limitations of the game, using an object isn't exactly clear cut either. My character wielded a dagger throughout the game but I couldn't get him to use it. Ah well . . .

What about the parser? Is there anything worth commenting on from the point of view of the text? No, is a fairly accurate answer to that. Two word input is about the best you are likely to get out of this one and even then, the vocabulary is so limited it's hardly worth the effort.

The game is not devoid of good features. You have the option of saving a game (though why you should want to is beyond me) and when a character is created at the beginning of a game, you can spend points on three major characteristics, decide upon a race and select a profession. This allows some individuality to brighten this otherwise barren piece of programming. But it doesn't alter the fact that this is the most abysmal game I've encountered for some time and lets down an otherwise decent package.

Atmosphere 20%
Plot 35%
Interaction 22%

cameron
A level 1 Dwarf Warrior.
exp. 1
hit points 300
gold 150
food units 150

MICROMAN

This adventure is apparently less ambitious than *Ring of Darkness* but proved to be far more enjoyable and original in the long run. The story casts you in the role of a professor who is the victim of a cliched, though still most unfortunate, accident at his research lab. No it isn't an irradiated spider that bites you and no, you don't turn into Lou Ferrigno when somebody steps on your toe. You're no superhero but you are small. Somehow, after being affected by the radiation, you shrink to an uncomfortably small height. You do have enough time to drive to yur colleague's lab before the full extent of the damage from the radiation is done, however and here lies the main quest of the adventure.

Your fellow scientist's house is protected by a highly efficient and advanced security computer called COM 2. You have to defeat the security measures to enable you to reach the laboratory and find the antidote that will negate the leprechaun like effects you are suffering (very close to home, that; I like it). However, the task before you is difficult for two reasons. The problems posed are tricky, and the vocâbulary is non too friendly.

This particular game, I could only get to see on the Spectrum as the Amstrad version was still being prepared at the time of writing. The game appeared to be a standard *Quill* implementation with a few simplistic graphics. But despite the uncertainty as to how it will finally appear on the Amstrad, the actual content of the game is very good indeed. The text had a fresh style which did well to add character to the game and the difficulties you encounter will prove to be no push over.

With the emergence of new and better adventure writing utilities, it's nice to see that a good game relies on imagination and skillful crafting within the limitations imposed by the system as much as OTT presentation and hype.

If there are any criticisms to be made, they must be directed towards the vocabulary — or rather lack of it. So many times with quilled games, there is an unfortunate lack of synonyms and diverse vocabulary in general. This kind of error can only usually be rectified by making the sructure of the game tight and intense. However, this can be better than having the players become frustrated with the limitations of input. Moan over. I admit that the rather interesting angle this game took, helped me overcome any frustration.

Microman is a good game which, whilst having some drawbacks, more than makes up for the presence of *Ring of Darkness*. This one should keep you busy for quite a while.

Atmosphere 83%
Plot 79%
Interaction 50%



THE MURAL

This is a rather strange game, to say the least. I have some mixed feelings about it. The introduction is somewhat mad. Whilst walking down Neasden High Street, you are approached by two gentlemen who are noticable for the fact that they are — well, wearing suspender belts!!! Okay, as the game points out, anything can happen in Neasden but it's still a weird way to begin a game. Anyway, these two folks come from the Tightmouse board of censorship and they have a rather perculiar job for you. They want you to paint over an obscene Mural. Well, I can't imagine anyone going hoopy over the plot but it is original. Especially when you consider that the next thing they do is knock you out and leave you to awake in a cave . . .

And this is where things start going down hill a little. The cave is below a deserted country cottage, part of a network which is determined to prove the Earth is round. If you walk in a straight line away from the cottage for long enough, you return to it. During the time I played, I couldn't tell whether this was somehow intentional and one cottage was supposed to be a mirror image of the other. Curiouser and curiouser as a girl with a rabbit fetish once said . . .

Anyway, the game contains nothing really remarkable or inovative in terms of structure or design. It's your down the line, two-word input, limited vocabulary adventure game. Despite the rather average nature of the game's design, there is a little humour which works quite well (though the exceptions will really make you cringe). Whilst some problems arise out of the lack of a decent parser and vocabulary, others prove quite taxing and well devised. The main thing they lack is internal consistency. I can't help feeling the author spent quite some time out of his skull when he wrote this.

Really, the point of the game is to find the offending wall and rectify the situation there. Slightly unreal, I admit, but much of the rather surreal humour seemed to make up for the lack of actual adventure content. The answers to most of the problems posed lie in the player's capacity for lateral thinking and that is just what's required in an adventure game — but it needs a thread of direction and purpose to avoid just becoming a senseless contrivance of collected puzzles. And I'm afraid that *The Mural* borders that very dangerously indeed.

It isn't all bad. It did make me laugh and despite the unfriendliness of the game, it was impulsive for a while (though I honestly cannot think why). All things considered, it isn't a total failure and could prove to be an interesting diversion when you're stuck in another of the games.

Atmosphere 63%
Plot 53%
Interaction 49%

GALAXIAS

Now this is a good game. *Galaxias* is a game that would warrant a £7.95 price tag on its own. It's actually an early Fergus McNeill creation. His later works have included the marvellous *Bored of the Rings* and the equally addictive *Robin of Sherlock*. Those games were packed with incisive wit and ingeniously devised puzzles. Those rare and noteworthy features have been applied here. Again, the version I played was a Spectrum one because, as with *Microman*, the Amstrad conversion was still being worked on. There were some mediocre graphics accompanying the game but how these will appear on the Amstrad, I have no idea. The game itself should remain unchanged and that's just the way it should be.

Sorry, I'm getting ahead of myself. The plot depicts you as the captain of a spaceship (okay, a pirate vessel actually), searching a star system for a rare and valuable crystal. Most of the investigatory work is handled via your ship's powerful on-board computer. Exploring each of the planets allows you to collect several items sueful for later in the game. It also allows a glimpse of the wonderfully atmospheric descriptions which highlight Mr McNeill's extraordinary talent.

This game is a must, not only for the dedicated McNeill afficionado but for any self respecting Amstrad adventurer. Whilst the parser is typically limited, the best use is made of the system. Catering for any idiosyncratic responses from the player isn't easy with *The Quill* and to see a utility being streched to its limits in this way shows what a caring and skillful author is capable of.

The humour is spot on. There are references to the laser scorches lining the wall behind the bar — a subtly satirical interpretation of the cantina scene in Star Wars. But there's much more in the way of poking fun at science fiction in general. The humour could be criticised as being a little plagiaristic (or incestuous, depending on your point of view) at times, but I didn't find it overly so. You can certainly see where the skill responsible for his later games originated.

Galaxias has to take place as my favourite in the collection. It has a style and degree of professionalism approached only by *Microman*. It will also keep adventurers going the longest of the four. It's time Mr McNeill got to grips with a more sophisticated game designer and really began to shine.

Atmosphere 88%
Plot 86%
Interaction 60%

FOURMOST ADVENTURES

CONCLUSIONS

I can't help feeling that the whole package would have been markedly improved by the presence of an Amstrad version of *Out of the Shadows*. However, despite the incongruous presence of the amateurish *Ring of Darkness* and the dubious *The Mural*, which makes me doubt Tony Bridge's taste somewhat, the compilation still has worth. Both *Microman* and *Galaxias* are well crafted, if unambitious games. All in all, *Fourmost Adventures* is quite a catch for adventurers and represents good value for money.

Value for money 84%
Overall 85%

La Geste d'Artillac

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

When 'those nice people from South London' (Mike Daniels' words, not mine) came up to see us, they brought with them a couple of adventure game programs from a French company called **Infogrames**. These were mixed graphic and text games which Mr Daniels was understandably excited about. Whilst my lack of fluent French was severe enough to stop me from making any conclusions about the plots, the aesthetics of these games were remarkable indeed. With some luck, translated versions should appear in the UK before long. They should help raise the standard of Amstrad software in the UK to as yet unprecedented heights. In the meantime, here are some shots from the games.

The first four photos are from a *Dungeons and Dragons* type role playing game called *La Geste d'Artillac*. It is set in a medieval world were magic thrives legends live . . . well, you get the idea. Full text screens also form part of the game but again, as these are in French at the moment, there's little point in showing them.

The second game is called *L'Affaire Vera Cruz*. In your job




KNIGHT GAMES
by Dennis Travers
Swordfight 1
Crossbow
Quarterstaff
Ball & Chain
Archery
Pike Staff
Axe Man
Swordfight 2

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

as a detective, you have arrived on the scene of a suicide. Yes, I'm afraid the lovely girl below isn't waiting for her Mr Right to come through the door. The more observant of you will have already noticed the pool of blood that has poured from a bulet wound in her chest and the gun to her side. You have a red frame cursor which can be moved around to magnify areas of the screen to show detail. On a colour screen, you can see the lipstick on the end of the cigarette in the ashtray, the fine detail on the revolver, the suicide note and the lettering on the packet of Rothman's cigarettes.

You have to prove that this was a murder. There are already some suspicious circumstances. The half somoked cigarette in the ashtray is a Camel (with lipstick on the filter) — so why is the packet Rothman's? Anyway, if you can bear to go past the beautiful (but dead) girl, you are returned to HQ where the telex machines is used to gain information about possible suspects. I haven't seen further than this but believe me, it looks exciting . . . .

The use of colour in both games is very subtle. The scene with the girl uses shades of grey throughout — with the execption of the deep red blood. Most effective. The shots of the fantasy game use shades of yellow which give the chilling effect of a wintery sun. The packaging is very similar to early Infocom in terms of individualistic and characteristic design. *Artillac* for instance, comes in what appears to be an old, leather bound book (which even has a pop-up section containing clues).

Exactly who is going to licence these games and when, are two questions which as yet remain unanswered. I await their arrival with bated breath. They promise to add a new dimension to graphic adventure gaming.





ADVENTURE
MINDSHADOW
MAPPED FOR AMTIX!
BY
B. BARRAS
MOUNT
QUICKSAND
QUICKSAND
QUICKSAND
MOUNT
MOUNT
MOUNT
QUICKSAND
MOUNT
MOUNT
QUICKSAND
MOUNT
QUICKSAND
WARNING SIGN
MOUNT
QUICKSAND
MOUNT
BEACH
IN HUT
BEFORE HUT
OLD DORY
JUNGLE OASIS
BEACH
ROCKY CLIFF
IN CAVE
OUTSIDE CAVE
THE ISLAND
LONDON
AIRPORT
BAKER ST.
DINGY STORE
REST ROOM
DERELICT
BAKER ST
RICK'S CAFÉ
DINING ROOM
PIER
DOCKS
BAKER ST.
DARK ALLEY
DOCKS
DEAD END

Let trumpets sound triumphant fanfares. Let the light of a new day surge through the grimey windows of AMTIX! Towers and let its golden glow bring new life to my wordprocessor and rekindle the flickering fire in my fingers — and then get a psychiatrist for me, will you? Seriously, it's really good to see that the promise of software has succeeded in enticing your tips. Two people sent in maps of *Mindshadow* (so Oli has done some enhancements based on both versions), tips for games have started arriving . . . it's all looking good.

Keep sending your stuff in. The more the merrier. Any views specific to adventure gaming would be interesting to hear — those can be made use of in Arcana as well. For newcomers, the code used below is simply a reversed alphabet, so that A becomes Z, B becomes Y etc. Right then, let's get started on this month's material . . . .

THE HITCH HIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

Guess what? I boobed. When I last put in some tips for players of this game, I said you should KFG GSV OZITV KOFT RM OZITV IVXVKGZXOV. **Well don't. Not yet . . . sorry.**

Switching the device on now will alow entry (albeit random) into one of the alternative universes in the game. Have fun. These are the really tricky bits. . .

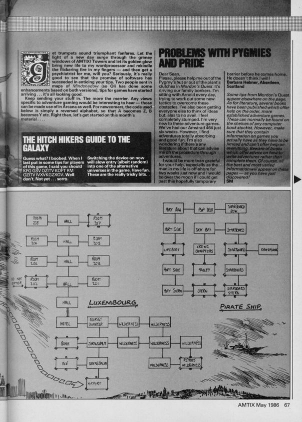
PROBLEMS WITH PYGMIES AND PRIDE

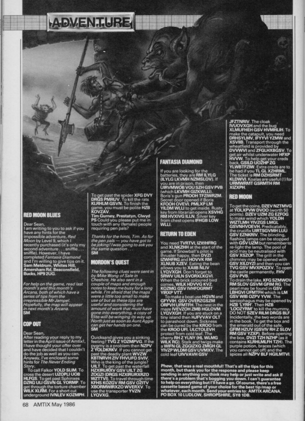
Dear Sean,
Please, please help me out of the Pygmy's hut or out of the plant's clutches in *Mordon's Quest*. It's driving our family bonkers. I'm sitting with Arnold every day, trying to work out some new tactics to overcome these obstacles. I've also been getting everyone else to think of ideas but, alas to no avail. I feel completely stumped. I'm very new to these adventure games. We've had our Amstrad 464 just six weeks. However, I find adventures totally absorbing and good fun. I'm also wondering if there's any literature about that can advise me on the procedure through adventures.

I would be more than grateful for your help, especially as the man in my life is off-shore for two weeks just now and I would be over the moon if I could get past this hopefully temporary barrier before he comes home. He doesn't think I will!

Barbara Hebner, Aberdeen, Scotland

Some tips from Mordon's Quest *appear elsewhere on the page. As for literature, several books have been published which offer help on the older, more established adventure games. These can normally be found on the shelves of any computer book stockist. However, make sure that they contain information on games you actually have as they have to be limited and can't offer help on everything. Beware of books which offer advice on how to write adventures rather than complete them. Of course, all the best and most varied information will appear on these pages — as you have just discovered!*
SM





RED MOON BLUES

Dear Sean,
I am writing to you to ask if you have any hints for the impossible adventure, *Red Moon* by Level 9, which I recently purchased (it's only my second adventure . . . sniffle . . . sniffle). However, I have completed *Fantasia Diamond* and I'm willing to give tips on it.
Sam Meldrum, Whites Hill, Amersham Rd, Beaconsfield, Bucks, HP9 2UG.

For help on the game, read last month's and this month's Arcana, both of which have a series of tips from the irrepressible Mr Jampel. Hopefully, the map will appear in next month's Arcana.
SM

COP OUT

Dear Sean,
After reading your reply to my letter in the April issue of Amtix!, I have thought your offer over and have decided that I couldn't do the job as well as you can. Anyway, I've enclosed some hints for *The Never Ending Story*.

To call Falkor **YOLD SLIM**. To cross the desert **UZOPLI UOB HLFGS**. To get past Sphinxes **DZRG ULI GSVN GL YORMP**. To get through the torture chamber **WILK XLRM**. For a short cut underground **IVNLEV KOZMPH**. To get past the spider **XFG DVY DRGS PMRUV**. To kill the rats **KLRHLM GSVN**. To finish the game, you must be polite **HZB KOVZAV**.
Tim Gurney, Prestatyn, Clwyd
PS Could you please put me in touch with any (female) people requiring pen pals?

Thanks for the hints, Tim. As for the pen pals — you have got to be joking! I was going to ask you the same question . . .
SM

MORDON'S QUEST

The following clues were sent in by Mike Wong of Sale in Cheshire. He also sent in a couple of maps and enough notes to keep me busy for a long while. I'm afraid that the maps were a little too small to make use of but as these tips are useful and considering the amount of work that must have gone into everything, a copy of Elite *will be winging its way up North just as soon as Aunt Aggie can get her hands on one.*
SM

Quicksand gives you a sinking feeling? **TVG Z YOZMPVG**. If the pygmy is a problem then **NZPV Z YOLDKRKV**. If you cannot get past the deadly plant **WVZW KBTNRVH ZIV FHVUFO SVIV**. Who is the king of the jungle? **UILT**. To get past the waterfall **HZXIRURXV GSV UILT ZG ZOGZI (DRGS HZXIRURXRZO WZTTVI)**. To travel through time **KFHS KOZGV RM GSV OZITV XBORMWIRXZO WVERXV**. To use the transporter **YVZN LYQVXG**.

FANTASIA DIAMOND

If you are looking for the batteries, they are **RM ILYLG (ILYLG LKVMH NZMSLOV)**. If you are in prison, then **UIRVMWOB VOU SZH GSV PVB** (which **LKVMH GIZKWLLI**). Boris's gun **PROOH TFZIWRZM**. Secret door opened if Boris **KFOOH OVEVI. PMLXP LM YILDM WLLI** to get inside. Rusty key from librarian opens **XSVHG RM HVXIVG ILLN**. Silver key from chest opens **IFHGB LOW WLLI**.

RETURN TO EDEN

You need **TVRTVI, IZVHFRG** and **XLNKZHH** at the start of the game. If Snowball's pilot is thruster happy, then **DVZI IZWHFRG** and **HOVVK RM XLNUB XZEV**. Eating the bean allows you to **XAIIB NLIV LYQVXGH**. Don't forget to **SRWV UILN SVORXLKGVI**. When the brick coloured bird comes, **WILK HDVVG KVZ. KOZMG GSV IVHFOGRMT YIRXP VTT**.

To make a boat use **HGVN** and **GFYVIH. GSV OVERZGSZM ORPVH UFMTFH**. The nest in the maze **IVEVZOH ZMB HGLOVM LYQVXGH**. If you are stuck on a tiny island then **HJFVVAV OLT** to parashoot down. Sickness can be cured by the **KROO** from the **KROO UFI. ULCTOLEVH** protect from cold leaf. The cherry **RH Z YLNY (HL WLMG WILK RG)**. Stalk and twigs make a **WIFN GL ZGGIZXG ZMGH GL YIVZP WLDM GSV UVMXV**. The cold leaf **UIVVAVH GSV JFZTNRIV**. The cloak **IVUOVXGH** and the bug **XLMUFHEH GSV HVMHLIH**. To make the catapult, you need **DRHSYLMV, IFYYVI YZMW** and **XSVIIB**. Transport through the wheatfield is provided by **DVVWVI** and **ZFGLHXBGSV**. To get air whilst underwater **HFXP HVVW**. To help get your creds back, **GSILD UOZHP ZG YLWBTFZIW**. Extra creds are to be had if you **TL GL XZHRML**. The ticket is **RM DZHSRMT KLDWVI**. Koalas are useful (!) for **URMWRMT GSRMTH RM XIZXPH**.

RED MOON

To get the coins, **DZEV NZTMVG** at **YOLXPVW DVOO** (worth 50 points). **DZEV UZM ZG EZFOG** to make wind which **YOLDH WIZTLMH YIVZGS LMGL GSVNHVOEVH**. Predicatably, the crucifix **UIRTSGVMH LUU GSV EZNKRIV**. The blinding, flashing lamps can be stopped with **GSV UZM** but remember to re-light the lamp. The pool of acid may be neutralised with **GSV XSZOP**. The grill in the chimney may be opened with **GSV XILDYZI** and then you can **TVG GSV MVXPOZXV**. To open the castle permanently, **FHV GSV PVB**.
To drain the lake, **KFG SZMWOV RM SLOV GSVM GFIM RG**. The pearl may be found in **GSV LBHGVI UFMTFH** which is **LM GSV WIB OZPV YVW**. The sarcophagus may be opened by **HZB 'LYRH'**. Then **HZB 'LOOZYRM'** to kill the mummy. DO NOT **SZEV RILM DRGS BLF**. Incidentally, the two words are in the book. To get the box and the emerald out of the safe, **GFIM HZUV (GSVIV RH Z SLOV RM GSV YZXP)**. Before opening the box, **DVZI TZH NZHP** (as it contains **KLRHLMLFH TZH**). The purple potion, braces (which you cannot get off) and the spices all **NZPV BLF HGILMTVI**.

Phew, that was a real mouthful! That's all the tips for this month, but thank you for the response and please keep sending in anything you think may help or just write and ask if there's a problem that's bogging you down. I can't guarantee to help on everything but I'll have a go. Of course, there's a free cassette based game of your choice for the best tip/map or whatever, each month. Send your entries to: AMTIX ARCANA, PO BOX 10 LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.


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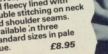
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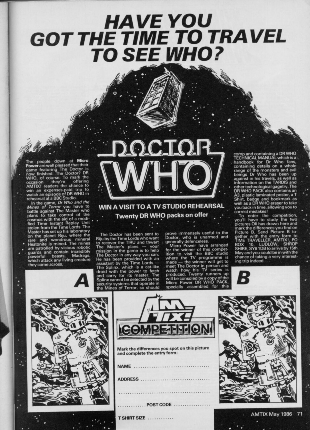
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HAVE YOU GOT THE TIME TO TRAVEL TO SEE WHO?

WIN A VISIT TO A TV STUDIO REHEARSAL

Twenty DR WHO packs on offer

The people down at **Micro Power** are well pleased that their game featuring The Doctor is now finished. The Doctor? DR WHO, of course. To mark the occasion they're offering AMTIX! readers the chance to win an expenses-paid trip to watch an episode of DR WHO in rehearsal at a BBC Studio.

In the game, *Dr Who and the Mines of Terror* you have to battle against The Master who plans to take control of the cosmos with the aid of a modified Time Instant Replay Unit stolen from the Time Lords. The Master has set up his laboratory on the planet Riju, where the rare and wondrous mineral Heatonite is mined. The mines are patrolled by vicious robotic guards and contain incredibly powerful beasts, Madrags, which attack any living creature they come across.

The Doctor has been sent to Riju by the Time Lords who want to recover the TIRU and thwart The Master's plans — your mission in the game is to help The Doctor in any way you can. He has been provided with an assistant by the Time Lords — The Splinx, which is a cat-like droid with the power to fetch and carry for its master. The Splinx cannot be detected by the security systems that operate in the Mines of Terror, so should prove immensely useful to the Doctor, who is unarmed and generally defenceless.

Micro Power have arranged for the winner of this competition to visit the BBC studio where the TV programme is made — the winner will get to meet The Doctor in person and watch how his TV series is produced. Twenty runners up will be consoled by a copy of the Micro Power DR WHO PACK, specially assembled for this comp and containing a DR WHO TECHNICAL MANUAL which is a handbook for Dr Who fans, containing details on a whole range of the monsters and evil beings Dr Who has been up against in his travels, as well as information on the TARDIS and other technological gagetry. The DR WHO PACK also contains an A3, plastic laminated poster, a T Shirt, badge and bookmark as well as a DR WHO eraser to take you back in time, allowing you to correct mistakes!

To enter the competition, you'll have to study the two pictures Oli has drawn here and mark the differences you find on Picture B. Send Picture B together with the entry form to TIME TRAVELLER, AMTIX!, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB to arrive by 15th May and you could be in with the chance of taking a very interesting trip indeed . . .

A

B

AMTIX! COMPETITION

Mark the differences you spot on this picture and complete the entry form:

NAME ....

ADDRESS ....

....

.... POST CODE ....

T SHIRT SIZE ....

WINNERS



One of the major problems with being a competition minion is you can never win any of the super prizes and I have to confess I really get envious of you lucky winners. Another problem, of course, is that as soon as you have opened a multitude of envelopes, sorted them into piles, and then selected the winners you have no time to sit back and reflect on the state of the world. Why not you ask? Well it's back to square one and another sackful of would-be winners. Woe is me. There never seems to be any time to make a welcome brew or cause chaos in mail order any more. Uncle Malcolm will have to learn the art of making a brew in double quick time. Anyway here's the moment you have all been waiting for, the chance to wade through the winners' list from issue four.

DANGER AGGRESSOR COMPETITION WINNERS

Loads of imagination was needed by those who entered our *Yie Ar Kung Fu* competition. As you will recall you had to design another opponent for Oolong, the hero of the game. We said the opponent could be either male or female, the rest was left to your imagination. After much deliberation, and a welcome cuppa, (I do believe the word surgeon has learnt how to fill the kettle) it was decided the following lucky people had won a copy of this SUPER game from Imagine.

Mark Richard Long, Essex, CM8 1ER; Amtix Reader, London, N13 5BJ; Chris Donovan, Hampshire, GU12 4UD; Mark Jonathan Soonaye, Cheshire, CW12 4JN; Stephen Eddleston, Kent, TN16 3LS; Leon Drake, Surrey, GU17 OLB; Jonathan Williams, Kent, CT7 OAN; Adrian Dalton, Northampton, NN11 4QL; Russell Jones,South Wales, CF1 7BU; Ian McGregor, Herts, WD3 3JA Lee Pryer, London, N9 9RF Graham Dann, North Wales, LL57 4AE; Paul Nithsdale, Sheffield, S6 6TG; Ali Salmon, London, SW6; Jonathan Meadows, Gwent, ND7 5NA; Scott Nithsdale, Sheffield, S6 6TG; Anthony Nicholas, Nottingham, NG8 5GX; Gordon Hayward, Beds, LU3 2LT; Gary Bird, Liverpool, L14 7QB; Mr Eric Wilson, Cambridgeshire, CB6 2TG; Simon Gibbs, Dronfield, S18 6LN; Timothy J F Wright, Isle of Wight, PO38 1XY; Noel Speake, Birmingham, B28; Paul Curtis, Birmingham, B35 7PE; John Conway, Scotland, G53 7QN; Frank Gniadkowski, Birmingham, B44 8RE; Grant Woodward, Birmingham, B31 2NR; Romain Cragg, Suffolk, CO10 OAP; Phillip Michael Williams, South Wales, SA19 6HN; Robert White, Herts, AL1 4RJ; Steve Painter, Surrey, SM4 4JS; Mr A D Phung, Fife, KY12 OBT; Christopher Green, Birmingham, B32 3QD; Jason Darragh, Middlesex, TW12 1SL; Murray Urquhart, Inverness, IV2 4AE; Philip Matthews, Worcestershire, WR11 6UQ; Stephen Humphreys, Liverpool, L28 4EW; David Blyth, Suffolk, NR32 3JL; Stephen Whitehouse, Wolverhampton, WU4 6DA; David Prew, Oxon, OX15 5NG; Glen Fanus, London, N7 7RS; Shahid Rasul, Scotland, FK10 3SG; Stephen Rose, Bucks, HP5 1SY; Rajiv Viswanathan, London, E15 2DB; Daniel Farr, Hereford, HR4 OJZ; Gail Cheshire, London, SW10 OEB; Robert Dadley, Kent, CT21 5DN; Matthew Blakesley-Spicer, South Yorkshire, S64 OAX; Warren Cheshire, London SW10; Amtix Reader, London, S69 1HX

BIFF AND BOP COMPETITION WINNERS

Surprisingly we appear to have a lot of knowledgeable readers when it comes to the sport of boxing. Our Biff n Bop competition, where you had to correctly answer five questions about this noble sport, attracted lots and lots of entries and many of them correctly answered the posers. Anyway enough of this trivia the following lucky readers will be receiving a copy of *Barry McGuigan's World Championship Boxing* in the very near future.

S Haley, Coventry, CV5 7NX; Shafique Choudhary, Scotland, FK9 1DG; R A C Currie, Leeds, LS25 5AQ; Gary Denton, Leeds, LS4 2DU; N R Vickers, Yorkshire, YO8 7JS; D Bingham, Northants, NN15 6BA; Darryl Artt, Kent, CT4 6PD; R G Messenger, Perth, PH2 9NE; Michael R Ray, London, SW16 6DL; Scott Warner, Wickford, Essex; Ivor T Williams, Wousley, M28 4BE; Richard Wigley, Derbyshire, DE6 4FL; Jonathan H Hill, West Yorkshire, WF1 2AF; Mark Baker, Suffolk, IP10 OUX; Paul Houldsworth, Lancs, BB6 7AS; David Dance, Essex, CO75 3JN; Andrew Kerr, Staffs, WS7 OBJ; Dean Giles, Bristol, BS7 ONU; M Bird, West Bromwich, B70 8HE; Adrian Timberlake, Kent, TN14 6EH; Howard Evans, North Yorkshire, YOZ1 3LZ; Christopher Smith, Herts, WD2 1HA; Parbinder Sahota, Derby, DE3 8JH; Lewis Spooner, West Sussex, RH14 OSB; David Mayers, Northern Ireland, BT74 6HR; Andrew Peerless, Merseyside, L43 2NG; Michael Spofforth, Merseyside, L20 9HT; Karen Stead, Staffs, ST2 OQP; Robert Whitmore, West Midlands, B63 3EF; Paul Cichamski, Scotland, FK10 3SR; J Hamilton, Bucks, HP22 5QQ; Anthony Collins, Birmingham, B24 9NX; Matthew White, Leeds, LS8 1NS; Mark Horton, Middlesex, UB8 3JZ; W Smaje, Lancs, L88 8NG; Robert N White, Surrey, GU6 7BU; Adrian Want, Oxon, OX8 3BA; Andrew Cox, Hereford, HR1 1LE; Paul Edwards, Herts, SG1 5TW; R S Patterson, Belfast, BT6 OED; Stephen Jeffs, Glos, GL15 4SN; Ian Steel, Berkshire, RG13 1UW; Gary Milner, Tyne & Wear, NE32 4EQ; John Sholicar, Glos, GL52 3DA; Justin M Tomkins, Kent, TN17 4LS; A M List, Peterborough, PE2 ONR; Matthew Abbott, Oxon, OX15 4BB; Daniel Castle, Wilts, SN8 1BJ; Iain Williams, Merseyside, L37 7HP; Scott Menzies, Glasgow, G45 9SE

CARTOON STRIP COMPETITION WINNER

We promised the winner of this competition a crazy day out at **Mastertronic** Towers in London and dangling that bait certainly made you put on your thinking caps for this absolutely crazy contest. As you will remember you had to complete a cartoon strip which featured private investigator, Sam Shovel. Some of you clever dicks (get it?) drew a couple more frames while others finished off the story in written form. Anyway the lucky winner is **Tom Scutt**, of Nyewood Lane, Bognor Regis, who can look forward to a really mad day. Have fun Tom!

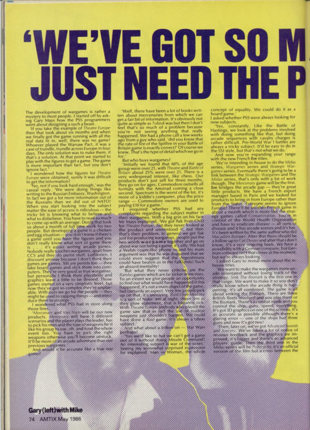
WEST BANK BADDIES COMPETITION WINNERS

For some reason or other the chance to own a much sought after *West Bank* sweatshirt did not appeal to AMTIX! readers or could it be that few of our readers could not come up with the necessary inspiration to create a real Wild West baddie. In any event **Gremlin Graphics** are going to be able to save a few pennies by sending out their super prizes to the following. Perhaps they might like to send the competition minion a sweatshirt (it gets very chilly in the broom cupboard). The following will each receive a sweatshirt.

Matthew Blakesley-Spicer, South Yorkshire, S64 OAX; Matthew Hadfield, Kent, DA14 4LU; Stephen Swain, Birmingham, B47 5HL; Mr D Parkins, Cumbria, CA2 7JY; Che Wall, Kent, ME15 6BX; James Hursley, Berkshire, SL3 9DT; A C Leakey, Lancs, WN7 4HT; Warren Hamilton, Northern Ireland, BT74 ORS; J Mason, Isle of Wight, PO37 7DY; Nick Card, Hants, GU14 ODX



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'WE'VE GOT SO M
JUST NEED THE P

The development of wargames is rather a mystery to most people. I started off by asking Gary Mays how the PSS programmers went about designing a such a beast.

'If you take the example of *Theatre Europe* then that took about six months and when we finally got the game running with all the real data in in, well, there was no game! Whoever played the Warsaw Pact, it was a case of trundle, trundle across Europe in four days. The only solution was to nuke them, if that's a solution. At that point we started to play with the figures to get a game. The game is more important than fact, but you don't ignore fact.'

I wondered how the figures for *Theatre Europe* were obtained, surely it was difficult to get the information?

'No, not if you look hard enough,' was the casual reply. 'We were doing things like writing to the Russian Embassy, Washington. In fact we got a lot more information out of the Russians than we did out of NATO! When you start looking into the subject matter the ease of access is ridiculous — the tricky bit is knowing what to believe and what to disbelieve. You have to read so much to come up with an average. Doing that took us about a month of full time work for two people. But developing a game is a chicken and egg situation — you don't know if there's a game until you have the figures and you don't really know what sort of game there is . . . it's easier writing arcade games. Nobody really touches wargames, apart from CCS and they do purist stuff. Lothlorien, I discount anyway because I don't think their games are games. SSI are purists too — they take board games and stick them into computers. They're very good as true wargames but personally I think their playability and graphics leave a little to be desired. Those games started on a very simplistic level, but now they've got so complex they're unplayable. With ours we go for the people — they might be used to zapping things — and introduce them to strategy.'

I wondered what PSS had in store along those lines.

'*Mercenary* and *Viet Nam* will be our new products. *Mercenary* will have 3 different scenarios and the player plays the leader, has to pick his men and the type of weapons he'd like his group to use, oh, and fund the whole event too. You have to pick the right weapons otherwise you'll become unstuck. It'll be more of an arcade adventure than our previous wargames.'

And would it be accurate like a true war game?

'Well, there have been a lot of books written about mercenaries from which we can get a fair bit of information. It's obviously not quite as simple as *Tobruk* was but then I don't feel that's so much of a problem because you're not seeing anything that really happened. We had a phone call a few weeks ago from a guy who said, 'did you know that the rate of fire of the Spitfire in your Battle of Britain game is exactly correct?' Of course we knew. That's the type of detail which we go in for.'

But who buys wargames?

'Initially we found that 60% of thé age group were over 21, with *Theatre* and *Battle of Britain* about 25% were over 21. There is a very widespread interest, like chess. Our products don't just sell for three months, they go on for ages. Commodore outsells all formats with the Amstrad coming a close second. Spectrum is the worst of the lot, it's more of a kiddie's computer, plus the price range — Commodore owners are used to paying £10 for a game.'

I enquired whether PSS had any complaints regarding the subject matter in their wargames. With a big grin on his face Mr Mays explained, 'We got flak from CND for *Theatre Europe*, but they never looked at the product and understood it, but then that's their problem. In general we get flak just for producing wargames, people put the two words w-a-r g-a-m-e together and go on about war not being a game, it's silly. We had a Welsh councillor phone in, and his main argument was that he was disgusted that we could even suggest that the Argentinians could have beaten us in the Falklands! Such an absurd mentality!

'But what they never criticise are the *Rambo* games which are far sicker in my eyes. To an extent we give people an opportunity to find out what would have happened if this happened, it's not a main object of the game, but certainly an aspect. Very few people pick up on that, it's annoying. *Red Clear Morning* is a sort of Nuke 'em at night, shoot 'em as they glow statement, that is blatantly sick. With *Theatre Europe* anybody who played the game saw that in fact the use of nuclear weapons just shouldn't happen. We could have done a *Raid* game. It's always a taboo subject.'

And what about a follow on — Star Wars perhaps?

'Yes we'd like to but we can't get a game out of it without doing Missile Command! An interesting subject is war of the sexes.' Seeing my somewhat surprised expression he explained. 'Man vs Woman, the whole concept of equality. We could do it as a board game.'

I asked whether PSS were always looking for new subjects.

'Yes, constantly. Like the Battle of Hastings, we look at the problems involved with doing something like that, but doing arcade sequences with cavalry charges is rather difficult. Pre-World War I battles are always a tricky subject. It'd be easy to do in the SSI style, but that's not what we do.'

And now you're expanding your range with the new French **Ere** titles.

'We're intending in-house to do the *Midas* series, *Wargames* series and *Strategic Wargames* series. Eventually there's going to be a link between the *Strategic Wargames* and The *Midas* series, that's only with a lot of work though. The *Mercenary* game will be the first. **Ere** bridges the arcade gap — they're great little products. We have a French export manager based in Paris and we looked for products to bring in from Europe rather than from the States. Everyone seems to ignore Europe! There'll be another French game in about a month which is more like the strategy games called *Contamination*. You're in control of the World Health Organisation and have to eradicate disease — all sorts of disease and it has arcade scenes and it's fun. It's been written by the same author who did *Macadam Bumper*. After that there should be a follow up to *Get Dexter* and after that I don't know, it's a very ongoing basis. We have a possibility with a German company, but German software isn't that clever at the moment, but we're always looking.'

I asked Gary to reveal more about the in-house titles.

'We want to make the wargames more arcade orientated without losing track of the strategy. *Sink The Bismark* is the first one in that range. We want to make it so you don't really know when the arcade thing is happening, it's all combined. The game is all about sinking the Bismark. There are three British fleets involved and you play them or the Bismark. There's a combat mode and you control the ships, guns, speed, everything. It's got 3D graphics on one of the screens. It's as accurate as possible although there's a glaring error — one of the ships had three guns and now it's got two!

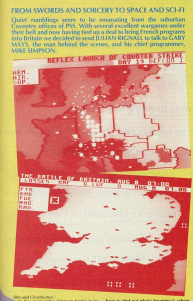
'Then, later on, we've got *Advanced Swords and Sorcery*. We've taken a lot of notice of reviews feedback and the graphics are improved, it's bigger and there's an advanced players' guide. Then the third one in the *Midas* series will be *Poltergeist*, it's an official version of the film but a cross between the

Gary (left) with Mike

ANY IDEAS — WE ROGRAMMERS . . .

FROM SWORDS AND SORCERY TO SPACE AND SCI-FI

Quiet rumblings seem to be emanating from the suburban Coventry offices of PSS. With several excellent wargames under their belt and now having tied up a deal to bring French programs into Britain we decided to send JULIAN RIGNALL to talk to GARY MAYS, the man behind the scenes, and his chief programmer, MIKE SIMPSON.



film and *Ghostbusters*.'

At this point Mike Simpson broke in to explain. 'It'll be a case of going round a haunted house trying to de-haunt it. You'll have to find out what's haunting it, where, how to trap it. There'll be 3D graphics which will be played on a bigger screen and they'll be better than *Swords and Sorcery*. You can play several characters — a priest, mad professor, a schoolteacher and all that and there'll be a load of machines too . . .'

'The problem with *Swords and Sorcery*,' Gary continued, 'was getting over the initial impression that someone has. You look at the screen and say 'hmmm 3D monster maze'. With *Poltergeist* the impressions will be instant. *SAS* is far more complex than anyone has noticed.'

Mike agreed, 'Some of the things are so subtle. For example if you use a thrust attack against someone using stab the opponent will move back. If he's against a wall he'll die instantly. However if he's using parry it won't kill him if he's against the wall. There are 8 attacks and 8 defences with 64 different combinations. You could never really memorise them all, but if you could you'd be unbeatable! The advanced players' guide gives hints like that. You'll be able to do kung-fu stuff and eventually get skilled enough to maim opponents!'

Swords and Sorcery probably ranks as the longest awaited release in software history. I asked Gary why had it taken so long?

'It wasn't because of the game but the system. Mike wrote a new language, a sort of artificial intelligence.'

'We haven't used it to the full and it has a massive potential,' Mike said. 'It's very, very efficient on space — the whole of the conversation thing takes less than 3K! I'm into artificial intelligence and I'd like to do something where you could sit down and talk to the computer. I could do something that would appear bright for quite a long time before it became predictable. Learning is what people are looking for, but that would take a mainframe. A psychologist thing would be easy, and a fun program too. What I'd really like to do is a science fiction Midas game. If you look at stuff like *Elite* at the moment it's all very unrealistic, the way the ships move and all that. In real life you'd have weapons with ranges of millions of miles and you'd never be able to get out of the way of them. It'd all be handled by computers too, that's the way I'd do it, with combat more like Star Trek, the TV program not the game. There'd be a ship on screen and you'd lock on your phasers and fire when ready.

'Part of the *Midas* system that hasn't been used yet is the enormous, randomly generated database — although randomly generated you could go back to the same place and it would still be there. So in the sci-fi game I could have 65,000 stars, each a number of planets. Each planet would have life forms, names of continents, cities, you could go down to streets, houses, what the people in those houses do . . . You have name generators. If you think languages are constructed from 26 letters then you can work on those lines, only it's more complicated!'

At this point Gary Mays interjected, 'You're supposed to be working on *Swords and Sorcery*!'

'Yes, I am . . .' Mike answered, laughing and looking guilty.

Gary turned to me and said ruefully, 'We've got so many ideas, we just need programmers . . .'



AMTIX! TOP TWENTY FOR MAY

Here it is! The latest Top 20 Chart as voted by you, the readers of AMTIX! This month you voted for over 100 games. The figures in brackets are last month's position and it is interesting to note that almost half the games are new entries.

1 *(1)* **YIE AR KUNG FU** Imagine
22,738,760 Russell Wheeler, Bicester, Oxon

2 *(-)* **ELITE** Firebird

3 *(3)* **WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST** Melbourne House
2,193,000 Fuad Mohamed, London E2 6BN

4 *(2)* **SORCERY PLUS** Virgin Games

5 *(6)* **BRUCE LEE** US Gold
1,981,925 Brad Howarth, Saltford, Bristol

6 *(-)* **WHO DARES WINS II** Alligata
67,250 Paul Harwood, Morecambe, Lancashire

7 *(12)* **3D GRAND PRIX** Amsoft

8 *(4)* **SPY V SPY**

9 *(19)* **DALEY THOMPSON'S SUPERTEST** Ocean
541,690 David Gibbon, Bear Park, County Durham

11 *(-)* **SPINDIZZY** Electric Dreams

13 *(-)* **SWEEVO'S WORLD** Gargoyle Games

15 *(5)* **HIGHWAY ENCOUNTER** Vortex
2,099,250 A Jones, Market Drayton, Shropshire

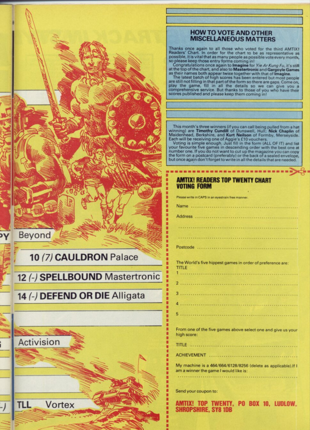
16 *(13)* **BARRY MCGUIGAN'S BOXING**

17 *(-)* **MARSPORT** Gargoyle Games

18 *(18)* **FINDERS KEEPERS** Mastertronic

19 *(-)* **HYPERSPORTS** Imagine

20 *(-)*



HOW TO VOTE AND OTHER MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

Thanks once again to all those who voted for the third AMTIX! Readers' Chart. In order for the chart to be as representative as possible, it is vital that as many people as possible vote every month, so please keep those entry forms coming in!

Congratulations once again to **Imagine** for *Yie Ar Kung Fu*, it's still at the top of the chart, and also to **Mastertronic** and **Gargoyle Games** as their names both appear twice together with that of **Imagine**.

The latest batch of high scores has been entered but most people are still not filling in that part of the form so there are gaps. Come on, play the game, fill in all the details so we can give you a comprehensive service. But thanks to those of you who have their scores published and please keep them coming in!

This month's three winners (if you can call being pulled from a hat winning) are **Timothy Cundill** of Dunswell, Hull; **Nick Chaplin** of Maidenhead, Berkshire, and **Kurt Neilson** of Formby, Merseyside. Each will be receiving one of Aggie's £10 vouchers.

Voting is simple enough. Just fill in the form (ALL OF IT) and list your favourite five games in descending order with the best one at number one. If you do not want to cut up the magazine you can copy the form on a postcard (preferably) or the back of a sealed envelope, but once again don't forget to write in all the details that are needed.

AMTIX! READERS TOP TWENTY CHART VOTING FORM

Please write in CAPS in an eyestrain free manner.

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The World's five hippest games in order of preference are:

TITLE

1 ....

2 ....

3 ....

4 ....

5 ....

From one of the five games above select one and give us your high score:

TITLE ....

ACHIEVEMENT ....

My machine is a 464/664/6128/8256 (delete as applicable). If I am a winner the game I would like is:

....

Send your coupon to:

AMTIX! TOP TWENTY, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB

TAKE TO THE TRACK IN STYLE

Two Chances to win £1,000 worth of Kart and Karting Gear, courtesy of Rainbird

When it comes to Competition prizes, **Rainbird** doesn't mess around. The chaps behind Firebird's sister software house are offering two thousand pounds worth of Karting goodies in this competition.
Rainbird's got some pretty major plans when it comes to publishing software, too. ART STUDIO has won some serious acclaim — voted the best Spectrum Art Utility by CRASH it should soon be appearing on other machines. And THE MUSIC SYSTEM and THE ADVANCED MUSIC SYSTEM have really made a hit with Amstrad and Commodore owners. Anyone interested in making music, at any level, with their computer would be daft not to get hold of Rainbird's Tuneful Software.
But these major successes are but peanuts, as far as the Rainbird crew is concerned. They're going for the big time in the games market, and intend to tackle the big American software publishers at their own game, reversing the trend of American Imports. And from what we've seen so far, there's some pretty impressive product due from Rainbird's perch in the coming year.

The first Rainbird adventure game, THE PAWN, did more than raise a few eyebrows when it was unveiled on the Atari ST in Las Vegas — it stunned a few folks. Just take a peek at the picture taken from the Atari version of the game by Magnetic Scrolls. Wow! Eh? More and more text and graphics adventures are promised soon.

Strategy fans and Wargamers will soon thrill to Union Software's TRACKER, an artificially intelligent game with remote control fighting forces; underway on the Commodore at the moment Rainbird should be bringing a new brand of 3D combat to a microcomputer near you quite soon . . .

Another Atari ST product in the pipeline is STARGLIDER, a flight simulator which sets you in the cockpit of a well-heavy fighting machine. Indulge in arcade action as you get involved in Air to Air and Air to Ground combat. Argonaut Software are very busy with it at the moment, but conversions for other machines are planned.

Karting is an exciting sport, there's no doubt about that. Over 2,000 people are involved in the sport in this country and there are stacks of international competitions as well as UK championships for you to enter. Most people have a Kart racing circuit quite close to them — so don't worry, if you win, enjoying your prize to the full shouldn't present too much of a problem. Soon you, like Rainbird, could be on your way to the top. Remember some rather famous names in the motor racing world cut their driving teeth on Kart circuits: **Senna, Piquet, Surer, Cheever, Patrese, Fabit** and the current Formula One World Champion, **Alain Prost** to drop just a handful of names.



The sort of thing on offer, prizewise. A collection of goodies outside the ZIP KART showrooms — you could be shopping there with £1,000 of Rainbird's money to spend!

Cover piccy for THE PAWN.

NEAAAOW! Zooming along the cover for TRACKER, the strategy wargame that Rainbird should be publishing soon.

The STARGLIDER cover artwork

Atari ST incarnation of THE PAWN

E WITH



So, as you can see, Rainbird is going for the top. Their stated intention is to "beat the rest and become the best". Now they're giving two lucky readers of **Newsfield**'s magazines, CRASH, ZZAP! and AMTIX! the chance to race for the top in the Kart world.
The Big Cheese at Rainbird Software, Tony Rainbird (they called the company after him — he didn't change *his* name, so you can tell he's a Big Cheese Par Excellence) used to be a pretty good Kart Racer before he got too involved in computer software.
Tony decided to give a couple of Newsfield readers a helping hand up the ladder of Karting success. Rainbird, the software house, has purchased a couple of £1,000 vouchers from **Zip Kart**, premier suppliers of Karts and Karting accessories. If you win one of these vouchers you'll be able to get kitted out with a complete Kart, an engine, driver's suit, helmet, gloves, boots, a kit bag to keep everything in and a paddock stand to keep your shiny new Kart on when you're not racing it.

And there's more. Uncle Tony will be on hand when you scamper down to Zip Kart's Hoddesdon HQ to select the gear and he'll help you choose and set up your equipment as well as introduce you to some helpful people in the Karting world.

So. What have you got to do to convince Rainbird that you deserve to win a super Kart Kit? Design the Perfect Kart, that's what. Get out your pens, pencils, cameras, colouring sticks, pastels, TD pens or whatever and let your imagination run riot. Technology is not a problem — design the Kart and let the next generation of engineers worry about making it a reality. Money is no object — but don't go overboard with diamond-studded tyres for extra grip or anything, unless your Kart is for Oil Billionaires to play with. Don't forget that real Karts have a maximum engine capacity of 100 cc and the motor is two-stroke. Maybe you could bend the rules a bit with the Perfect Class of Kart . . .
Two readers from the three Newsfield magazines will collect a prize.

Entries please, to **RAINBIRD KART KOMP, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB** to arrive by 20th May this year. Best of luck!

BACK NUMBERS!

Your chance to fill that gap in your life

AMTIX! is THE magazine for the discerning Amstrad owner, combining the best in games reviews and technical know how, coping with adventures and strategy, your problems and ours! You shouldn't miss out on this, but if you haven't been able to get hold of earlier issues of AMTIX! we do have some in stock — and after all, you wouldn't want any holes in your AMTIX! binder would you? So order now!

No 1 November 1985

● Complete Guide to games I ● Lightpens ● Dun Darach Map ● Pyjamarama Map ● Everyone's a Wally Map ● Lords of Midnight Map ● CP/M ● Tape to Disk Utilities

No 2 December 1985

● Complete Guide II ● Fighting Fantasy ● Alien 8 Map ● Word Processing with Tasman ● FORTH on the Amstrad

No 3 January 1986

● Gargoyle Games Profile ● Knight Lore Map ● Public Domain CP/M ● Computer Art ● Extension ROMs ● RS232

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● Dynamite Dan map ● The world of Infocom adventures ● Amsoft visit ● The first batch of results ● Gremlin graphics, the journey, the people and the story ● Introduction to seducational software ● Preview of the The Music Processor.

No 5 March 1986

● Cauldron map ● More competition winners ● More educational software ● the improved AMX Mouse ● the Vortex expansion board.

No 6 April 1986

● Maps of Gunfright, Marsport and Three Weeks in Paradise ● A review of Pyradev ● The world of Lothlorien ● A visit to the Ocean and Imagine software company ● Readers awards ●

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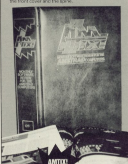
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Each binder takes twelve issues of AMTIX! held in place by small white plastic straps for ease of access. There's also a year sticker for the spine. The hand tooled, gold bound, Moroccan leather version would have cost about £150 each, so we have settled for the next best thing, a rich green with gold-ish tooling on the front cover and the spine.



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THE WAITING

WILF PRIGMORE takes a bold step into the not too distant future and, tongue in cheek, takes a poke at our future fads in the eating stakes

Fast food chains, of course, have been using them for ages, it was a natural progression. First the bland, mechanically-prepared food, then the bland mechanical service. The efficient but characterless droids which serve up your food are quite revolutionary — driven by an entirely new process which derives its source of power from the very noise within the establishment. At night, when the last customer has yelled 'heavy on the relish' and the canned music is turned off, the droids automatically degrease their two pairs of hands and curly ketchup dispenser, before going into standby mode. Noise Activated Fast Food Servants are known as NAFFS by the aficionados who frequent these emporiums.

It's probably before your time, but there was a brief, rather disastrous period (during one of the many fuel-shortage scares and everyone was looking for a cheap alternative) when an earlier, less efficient and leaky model was powered on a free yet socially dubious form of methane gas. This was unknowingly provided by the customers via specially-adapted cushions. Health inspectors went berserk, blaming the system for causing a virulent lung disorder, and warning that it would lead to the evolution of a race with enlarged nasal hairs to act as filters. These unimaginative people were no doubt descended from the cretins who strode in front of trains carrying red flags! More cynical observers at the time thought the real reason lay in the fact that the government couldn't think of a polite name for the tax which they would otherwise have heaped on the 'fuel'! And this could well be true. For when the current NAFFS came into being, the appropriate Department penalised the fast food chains claiming they were not paying enough tax. By way of a laugh up their sleeves they introduced E Naff Tax.

THE GREAT CULINARY DIVIDE

Having set the scene, let me now take you on a journey to the other side of the great culinary divide - a place you will know nothing about. How could you? I doubt if one of you reading this has ever been to the sort of eating establishment I now work in. Personally, I wouldn't want to dine there — even if I could bring myself to pay their prices! Fifty Eurocredits for a prawn cocktail is scandalous. A week's wages for most of you. Given the choice between the NAFFS and the toffs - I'd sooner eat at home! But I digress. Let me get to the point.

It's a bit embarrassing really, but I once worked for the firm which manufactures NAFFS. Usually, I never left the office unless it was to answer the call of nature or to catch the 5.30 gravi-train home. I was quite happy poring over my spreadsheets and inputting the occasional useless bit of information whenever anyone rang me on the visi-phone. Not that it happened very often. People seemed mostly to believe I was fully occupied. (Tip: Just make a lot of noise now and then and keep busy - looking at print-ups on your screen and they'll leave you alone.)

I'll never forget the day all that changed. I was so absorbed in Sir Shah's new brain-child — a daily international 3D paper in full colour — that I didn't hear the warning bleep on my visi-phone. The familiar, dreaded, nasal intonation made me jump. 'Duggie. come and see me at once!' R-right away, J.S. I'll finish my research later!' I took the lift to the 65th floor, I needed those seconds to be alone and compose myself. You couldn't hear yourself think with all those keep-fit fanatics pounding up and down the stairs! Why had our section head rung? If he was gunning for me he'd have extra ammunition now, having seen me with the paper. By the time I got to his office I was a gibbering wreck. 'Ah, come in, Duggie. Good of you to come so quickly. Ran all the way by the look of you. Well done. Glad to see everyone is taking my little speech about healthy bodies and healthy minds to heart - if you'll excuse the — pun!' Excuse it? Of course. Bless you, sir. So I'm not in trouble after all. Then why am I here? I wondered.' You're probably wondering why I called you here,'he said. 'Sit down, Duggie.'

Ignoring the visi-phone button by his right thumb he chose to bellow to his secretary sitting outside. 'Gail, bring me the figures for Casa Andre Vicente. Then tell Jeannie to get down here with her scissors'. Clinging anxiously to the sticky plastic seat, I was perplexed. Vicente's was only THE place to eat in town. People who ate there became legends in their lunchtime. According to the gossip columnists the place was owned by a retired writer who'd amassed his fortune by the imaginative manipulation of his former publishers' expenses system. If you ever pass it have a look at the menu. The prices are pure fiction! The secretary came in with the information J.S. had requested. 'You wanted these?' she asked — rather unnecessarily I felt — and bent over the table to place the documents before him. He answered in the affirmative. Serve him right if they were the wrong ones, he never took his eyes off the contents of her blouse! 'Now, where was I? Ah, yes . . .' He gazed at his face in the mirror strategically placed on the book base. 'A trim.' 'Beg pardon?' 'Of course, dear boy. Ah, there she is, Enter, Jeannie!'

It all seemed so unreal. As I watched snippets of hair fall onto the desk I could just about hear his voice over the hollow thumping in my brain. Between suggestive remarks to the attractive blonde working — not too happily I judged — on his greasy head, and some jargon which I found hard to follow, a fantastic story was unfolded for me. And all the while, his haircut was progressing. For reasons which eluded me - thanks mainly to the jargon! — Vicente's had decided some weeks earlier to buy a NAFF from us. Only it wasn't exactly a NAFF. It was a variation on the theme made exclusively for that restaurant.

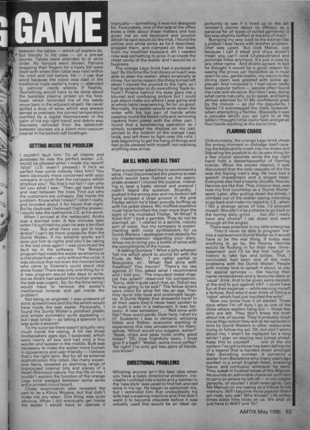
At first it had proved a popular gimmick. The Hooray Henries thought it was a 'hoot' and took all their friends to eat there. Yes, I know automated service is all we get nowadays, but the emphasis is on the WE. The clientele at Vicente's could buy up all the shops in your street with the change in their pockets. They are used to human waiters, you see! Therefore, the idea of a posh NAFF, as it were, attracted them like a new lager attracts lower orders to pubs. Apparently, and here J.S. consulted the figures before him, business at Vicente's had suddenly taken a downturn. Customers had turned on our automated waiter. (Prototype codenamed 'Dumb waiter' as the initials for this audio/olfactory model — activated by the words 'Yah, okay', and the smell of expensive perfume — spelled a dirty word).

It was vital, in terms of cashflow, and subsequent backhanders, that the problem was ironed out 'tout suite!' as he liked to say. I dimly heard myself ask 'why me?' and I vaguely recall being slapped on the back because I was 'the best man for the job' as J.S. ushered me out of the office, telling me to get down there right away and charge it all to expenses. But I clearly remember yelling when an unnecessarily hard pinch confirmed I was awake! I decided to take 'Big' Kaye with me. I'd been trying to impress her for ages, and if a trip to Vicente's didn't do the trick there was no hope for me. But the real reason, I tried but failed to convince myself, was that I had to test our 'Dumb Waiter' under field conditions. We hailed a helicab and set off

FLASHING DUMB WAITER

Presumably my contempt wasn't obvious. Listening to those people who still frequented the restaurant made my flesh creep. How I wanted to tell them where to jump off! Arrogant, toffee-nosed! The flashing light on the Dumb Waiter's forehead caught my attention. It wanted to know if I was ready to taste the wine. 'Just fill the glasses, will you?' The light continued flashing while the Dumb Waiter, bent forward at the waist and holding the bottle in a cloth, stood motionless. Was it deaf as well as 'Dumb'? 'Okay, yah, super!' said 'Big' Kaye, much to my embarassment. The waiter suddenly sprang to life and poured a small amount into my glass. I would have to change my accent or my after-shave if we came here again. Probably both! Giving the waiter our order was a little trying — to say the least.

'Chips' was definitely syntax error. Until we overheard someone talking about pommes frites it looked as though we were going to end up with a plateful of steak without trimmings. And later, when it came to the dessert, I had Cheddar, which I'm not too fond of. But unless you can roll your R's it's highly unlikely that a Dumb Waiter will understand you want Brie! I studied the waiter throughout the meal. He hovered



GAME

between the tables — which all waiters do, but literally in his case — on a pre-set course. Tables were attended to in strict order. No favours were shown. Patrons snapping their fingers for a hasty bill were dealt with when their table was next within his orbit and not before. He — I use that word because the robot was clad in the traditional male waiter's livery — attended to patrons' needs silently if flashily. (Something would have to be done about the tasteless plasma screen on his forehead, which reminded me of the seedy revue bars in the adjacent street). He never spilled a drop of wine, which was always served at precisely the correct temperature (verified by a digital thermometer in the palm of his top right hand) and debris was discreetly removed from the tablecloth between courses via a silent mini-vacuum cleaner in his bottom left forefinger.

GETTING INSIDE THE PROBLEM

I couldn't fault him. To all intents and purposes he was the perfect waiter. J.S. would be pleased when I made my report! 'Idiot!' (J.S. wasn't pleased.) If he's so perfect how come nobody likes him? You were obviously more concerned with your company at lunch than the company which employs you!' 'No that's not fair! I can only tell you what I saw.' 'Then get back there and read between the lines. Find out why the customers are unhappy. Get inside the problem. Know what I mean?' I didn't really, and brooded about it for hours that night. But by daybreak I believed I had the answer. I would take the loathsome J.S. at his word.

When I arrived at the restaurant, Andre was a worried man. A few minutes later when I'd outlined my plan he was a terrified man . . . 'But what have you got to lose, Andre? I can't be more unpopular than the Dumb Waiter. If my scheme works we'll soon put him to rights and you'll be raking in the loot once again! I was convinced the fault lay in the software. The 'Benson' program had made the waiter as smarmy as a chat show host — only without the voice. It was obvious that not even the monied twits who came to Vicente's could stand chat show hosts! There was only one thing for it. A new program would take days to write, but as Andre had sacked his human waiters the task was urgent., So, for the time being I would have to remove the waiter's mechanical innards and get inside the problem!

Not being an engineer, I was unaware of sonic screwdrivers and the like which would have made the task easier. Personally, I found the Dumb Waiter's polished plastic and simple symmetry quite appealing — but I wax lyrical — so taking a spanner to it was quite a wrench!

To my surprise there wasn't actually very much inside the casing. A bit like those loudspeakers ages ago, I supposed, which were nearly all box and had only a tiny woofer and tweeter in the middle. Bulk was necessary to make the waiter more human in appearance and user-friendly — I believe that's the right term. But for all its external sophistication this robot, like many expensive items, revealed an alarming range of improvised internal bits and pieces of a Heath Robinson nature. For the life of me, I couldn't explain the function of the orange Lego brick wedged between some wires and a printed circuit board.

Closer examination later revealed the part to be a Kilroy Wozere, but that didn't make me any wiser. One thing was quite obvious. When I did eventually get inside the waiter I would have to operate it manually — something it was not designed for. Fortunately, one of the lads at the office knew a little about these matters and had given me an old keyboard and joystick which he said would do the trick. I found the yellow and white wires as he'd described, snipped them, and clamped on the leads from my modified keyboard. All I needed now was something to prop it up inside the chest cavity of the waiter and I would be in business.

The orange Lego brick had a purpose at last! By the time the first diners arrived I was able to steer the waiter, albeit erratically at times. For some reason the thing turned left when I moved the joystick to the right, so I had to remember to do everything 'back-to-front'! Prisms behind his eyes gave me a blurred and confusing picture but I could just about make out where I was going and at which table I was serving. So far, so good. Normally, the waiter would write down the order with his top pair of hands while passing round the bread rolls and removing napkins from plates with the other pair. I found that a bewildering operation so I simply scrawled the choices on my pad, pinned to the bottom of the orange Lego brick, and left them to fight over the rolls. I was beginning to get the hang of things and feel quite pleased with myself, not realising anything was amiss.

AN ILL WIND AND ALL THAT

Then a customer asked me to recommend a wine. I had disconnected the plasma screen which would have flashed up the appropriate answer! I moved the joystick, intending to beat a hasty retreat and pretend I hadn't heard the question. Stupidly, I pushed it the wrong way and my bottom left hand scraped a large groove in the pink Filofax which he'd been proudly buffing up with his jacket sleeve. My muffled expletive must have horrified the man more than the sight of his mutilated Filofax. 'W-What? It thaid thit!' I took a gamble. 'Pray do not be alarmed, sir,' I uttered in a servile, robotic sort of voice, 'but my company is experimenting with voice synthesizers for us Dumb Waiters. I apologise most abjectly for my misdemeanour regarding your diary. Allow me to bring you a bottle of wine with the compliments of the house.

'A talking Dumboe'? What a jolly wheeze! Tell me which plonk to plump for with the Fruits de Mer.' 'I am rather partial to Beaujolais, sir'. 'What! Red wine with theafood? You moron!' 'There's no law against it! You asked what I recommend and I told you.' 'The impudent metal chappie has spiwit!' observed his companion. 'Sorry, didn't quite catch that, sir. Did sir say he was going to be sick?' The fellow diners were silent for what felt like an age. Then they burst into loud and prolonged laughter. A Dumb Waiter that answered back! In all their years they'd never been spoken to in such a way in a restaurant. It was fantastic. A new sensation . . . 'Red wine with fish? How avant garde. Over here. I shall try it!' Suddenly I was in demand, whizzing hither and thither, everyone wanting to experience this new amusement for themselves. 'Which would you suggest, waiter?' 'Steak, chips and peas looks pretty good today!' 'Oh, how frightfully basic. I must give it a bash!' 'Waiter, some more coffee!' 'All right! I've only got two pairs of hands, you know!'

DIRECTIONAL PROBLEMS

Whizzing around isn't the best idea when you have a basic directional problem. Inevitably I collided into a table and a dabbler in the 'new style' was upset to find fish and red wine in his lap. He began to admonish me, but I reminded him that undoubtedly his wife had a washing machine and if he didn't want it to become obsolete before it was actually used this would be an ideal opportunity to see if it lived up to the advertiser's claims about its efficacy as a panacea for all types of soiled garments! (I too was slightly baffled at the end of that)!

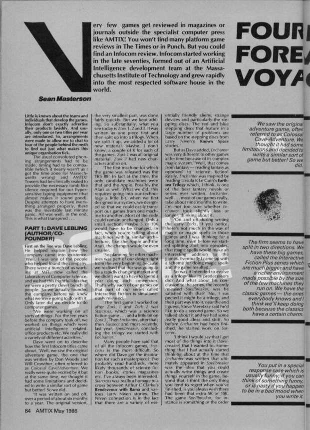
Bumping my way back to the kitchen like a pinball I was faced with another problem. Chef was upset. 'But look Marcel, just because I call it steak and chips doesn't mean you can't cook Chateaubriand and pommes frites anymore. It's just a rose by any other name.' And Andre agreed. In fact he thought it would be a good reason for easing the prices up! Incredible as it must seem to you, gentle reader, my return to the dining room was greeted with polite applause! And I enjoyed it. I had never really been popular before — people often found me rude and abrasive. But here I was, doing what came naturally, so to speak, and being almost adorned for it! My confidence grew by the minute — as did my popularity. I feared I'd overstepped the mark, however, when attempting a flambe. (Basically it was a pancake which you set light to at the table!) I thought I'd be really flash and get all four hands working at the same time.

FLAMING CHAOS

Unfortunately, the orange Lego brick chose the wrong moment to dislodge itself causing the keyboard to crash into my knees and liberating the joystick to do its own thing for a few crucial seconds while the top right hand held a dessertspoonful of flaming brandy. When the smoke cleared, it was discovered that the only casualty of the fire was the lisping man's wig. He now had a speech impediment and a singed head. Everyone else had a hearty chuckle. Hooray Henries are like that. That, more or less, was how my first lunchtime as a 'Dumb Waiter' went. Later, after pulling down the blinds, I climbed out of the waiter casing intending to go back and make my report to J.S., when I felt a strange sense of loss. I'd enjoyed myself. Wouldn't it be a shame to go back to the boring daily grind . . . but did I really have any choice? I sat down and went through all the angles.

There was potential in my little enterprise . . . They'd never be able to program 'me' into a replacement Dumb Waiter so it would have to be the real thing. If today was anything to go by, the Hooray Henries would be flocking in for their new 'divertissement' and I'd be the first 'robot' in history to take tips and bribes. That, I concluded, had been one of the main problems with the Dumb Waiter. People with money love to splash it about, to pay for special services — like having their name remembered and a favourite table or 'usual' drink. And to be given extra receipts at the end to put against VAT. I could have fun at their expense — while earning myself a fortune. And who'd ever think of hitting a 'robot' which had just insulted the wife?

Now you know how it all started. These days when I'm off duty I go to one of the dives where waiters hang out — those few who are left. They don't know the truth about me, of course. They'd probably lynch me as they reckon they will all be replaced in time by Dumb Waiters in other restaurants trying to follow my act. Oh, but don't worry about me, I shan't be replaced for a long while! I plan on staying two jumps ahead. Keep this to yourself . . . one of the old waiters I've got to know has been telling me of a legend that is handed down amongst their dwindling number. It concerns a waiter from Barcelona who many years ago worked in a small English hotel, wreaking havoc and confusion wherever he went. They speak in hushed tones of this Manuel. He sounds an admirable character and I aim to carry on where he left off — in my robotic persona, of course! I shall even spray Call Me Manuel on my casing as a tribute to his memory. Will I become more popular than I am now, you ask? Who knows? Life sometimes plays little tricks on us. We shall all just have to WAIT and 'Si!'



FOUR FORE VOYA

Very few games get reviewed in magazines or journals outside the specialist computer press like AMTIX! You won't find many platform game reviews in The Times or in Punch. But you could find an Infocom review. Infocom started working in the late seventies, formed out of an Artificial Intelligence development team at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and grew rapidly into the most respected software house in the world.

Sean Masterson

Little is known about the teams and individuals that develop the games. Infocom don't exactly advertise their products lavishly. And usually, only one or two titles per year are introduced. So, arrangements were made to allow me to chat to four of the people behind the myth to find out just what makes this unique organisation tick.

The usual convoluted phoning arrangements had to be made, timing had to be compatible (which it nearly wasn't as I got the time zone for Massechusetts wrong) and AMTIX! Towers had be clinically sealed to provide the necessary tomb like silence required for our hypersensitive taping equipment (that almost makes it sound good). Despite attempts to have everything arranged properly, there was the inevitable last minute panic. All was well, in the end. This is what transpired . . .

PART 1: DAVE LEBLING (AUTHOR/CO-FOUNDER)

First on the line was Dave Lebling. He helped explain how the company came into existence. 'Well, I was one of the people who helped found the company. There were a bunch of us working at MIT, now called the Laboratory of Computer Science, and we had this frightful idea that we were a pretty clever bunch of people. So we actually founded the company before we knew what we were going to do with it. Only later did we decide to do computer games.

'We were working on all sorts of things. For the ten years before the company took off, we worked on things which were artificial intelligence related, office products etc. We really did a variety of different activities.'

Dave went on to describe how the first Infocom titles came about. 'Well, we saw the original adventure game, the one that was written by Don Woods and Will Crowther, often referred to as *Colossal Cave/Adventure*. We really were quite excited by it but at the same time, we thought it had some limitations and decided to write a similar sort of game but better! So we did.

'It was written on and off, over a period of about six months to a year. The original version, the very smallest part, was done fairly quickly. But we kept adding. So substantially, what you see today is *Zork* 1, 2 and 3. It was written as one piece first and then split up into a trilogy. When we split it up, we added a lot of new material. Maybe, I don't know, a couple of K for each of the games. *Zork 1* was all original material. *Zork 2* had new characters and so on.

'The first machine for which the game was released was the TRS 80! In fact at the time, the only candidate machines were that and the Apple. Possibly the Atari as well. What we did, this requires going into our technology a little bit, when we first designed our system, we designed so that we could easily transport our games from one machine to another. Most of the code could remain unchanged. Only a small section, maybe 5 or 10K would have to be changed. In fact, when you're talking about machines with a similar architecture, like the Apple and the Atari, the changes would be even smaller.

'So planning for other machines was part of our design right from the very beginning because we realised that this was going to be a rapidly changing market and we didn't want to have to spend a year doing each conversion. That's why each of our games on that part of our series called Interactive Fiction is simultaneously released.

'The first game I worked on after *Zork 1* and *Zork 2* was *Starcross*, which was a science fiction game . . . and a little bit on *Zork 3*. Then *Enchanter*, after that; then *Suspect* and most recently, last year, *Spellbreaker*, concluding the trilogy we started with *Enchanter*.'

Many people have said that of all the Infocom games, *Starcross* is the most difficult. So where did Dave get the inspiration for such a masterpiece? 'I've probably read hundreds, more likely thousands of science fiction books, stories magazines etc. I've always been interested. *Starcross* was really a homage to a cross between Arthur C Clarke's **Rendezvous with Rama** and various Larry Niven stories. The Niven connection is in the fact that there are a variety of essentially friendly aliens, strange devices and particularly the stepping discs. The red and blue stepping discs that feature in a large number of problems are based on the stepping discs from Larry Niven's **Known Space** stories.'

But as Dave added, *Enchanter* was very different to other games at he time because of its complex magic system. 'Well, that comes from fantasy — reading fantasy as opposed to science fiction! Really, *Enchanter* was inspired by reading Ursula K Le Guin's **Earthsea Trilogy** which, I think, is one of the best fantasy novels or series ever written. *Enchanter*, well . . . most of our games really, take about nine months to write. I'm not too sure whether *Enchanter* took slightly less or longer, thinking about it.

'On and off during writing the early *Zorks*, if you notice, there's not much in the way of magic or magic spells in those games and I was thinking for a long time, even before we started splitting *Zork* into episodes, that magic spells would make an interesting addition to the games. Eventually I came up with a scheme for doing magic spells and the game resulted.'

So was it intended to evolve as a trilogy like its predecessors did? And what about his conclusion to the series, the recently released *Spellbreaker*, was he satisfied with that? 'No, I suspected it might be a trilogy, and then part way into it, near the end I guess, Steve Meretzky said he'd like to do a second game. So we talked about it and we had some really good ideas and stuff. So before *Enchanter* had been finished, he started work on *Sorcerer*.

'I think I would say that I got most of the things into it (*Spellbreaker*) that I wanted to. Something that I had actually started thinking about at the time that *Enchanter* was written that ultimately appeared in *Spellbreaker* was the idea that you could actually write things and create things yourself in the game. Beyond that, I think the only thing you tend to regret when you've finished, is you always wish there had been that extra 5K or 10K. The game *Spellbreaker*, for instance is something of the order

> *We saw the original adventure game, often referred to as Colossal Cave-Adventure. We thought it had some limitations and decided to write a similar sort of game but better! So we did.*

> *The firm seems to have split in two directions. We have these big games, called the Interactive Fiction Plus series which are much bigger and have a richer environment made possible by the size of the few machines they run on. We have the classic games — the ones everybody knows and I think we'll keep doing both because the classics have a certain charm.*

> *You put in a special response case which is usually funny, if you can think of something funny, or is nasty if you happen to be in a bad mood when you write it.*



R MINDS EVER AGING

Planning for other machines was part of our design right from the very beginning because we realised that this was going to be a rapidly changing market and we didn't want to have to spend a year doing each conversion.

I think the only thing you tend to regret when you've finished, is you always wish there had been that extra 5K or 10K.

of 1K — once it's inside the system, so a lot of things have to be left out just because of the lack of room.'

Dave explained which of the games he found most difficult to write and which had become his favourite. He also made a point about Infocom's aims in game design. 'Definitely *Suspect*. I've read enormous amounts of literature, not just SF and fantasy but mystery, adventure, so I vowed that I'd never do another one until . . . I will do another mystery once we have a better parser. You need it for the characters. It's too frustrating given the limitations of the conversations.

'Probably, I would say that the favourite is a toss up between *Enchanter* and *Starcross*. I like *Starcross* because my my real love is for just hard SF — stories which move the plot along with science. A lot of the puzzles are down like that in the game. I enjoy that. I enjoy that kind of story.

'The firm seems to have split in two directions. We have these big games, called the Interactive Fiction Plus series which are much bigger and have a richer environment made possible by the size of the few machines they run on. We have the classic games — the ones everybody knows and I think we'll keep doing both because the classics have a certain charm.

'So we'll keep doing that, but more importantly, I think what we want to do is keep . . . well, we want to get it so that play is better, interaction is a lot smoother and more conversational than it is now. What we have done over time is improve it little by little so there are improvements in say, *Spellbreaker* over *Enchanter* but we still know we're geared to smoothness in talking to other human beings. The closer we can get to that, the better our games will be because you don't want to spend most of your time playing what we call 'guess the word'. Our games have very large vocabularies; *A Mind Forever Voyaging* has over two thousand words. On the level, that's still not as much as you would like. The level of English understood is good but not as good as we would like. As we say on our packages, we're never satisfied.'

All this was very interesting, but where did the strange *Cornerstone* project fit into the pattern and what's more — what was *Cornerstone*? '*Cornerstone* is a business product. It is the first in a line of business products and it uses similar technology to the games. That is to say, there is a large core which doesn't change on different machines. So far, we've only put it out for the IBM PC and the Apple series. It may come out for other machines in the future. We occasionally refer to it as our worst game.'

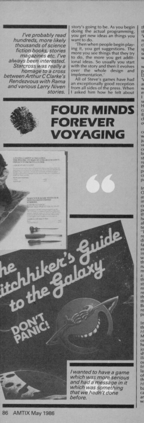
PART TWO: STEVE MERETZKY (AUTHOR)

With that, Dave disappeared to be replaced at the mouthpiece by one of the most famous members of the Infocom team, 28 year old Steve Meretzky who began by telling me how he first began working for the company. 'I've been with the company about four years. I started as a games tester. Well, I worked on the first two games that Infocom did, that is *Zork 1* and *Zork 2*. The first one that I actually did as an employee was *Deadline*.'

How did the plot for his first game, *Planetfall* come about? 'Well, I would say that it was pretty typical of most of our designs which is that you start with a storyline and it changes somewhat along the way, but before you begin, you do have an idea of at least roughly what the

I've probably read hundreds, more likely thousands of science fiction books, stories magazines etc. I've always been interested. Starcross was really a homage to a cross between Arthur C Clarke's Rendezvous with Rama and various Larry Niven stories.

FOUR MINDS FOREVER VOYAGING



I wanted to have a game which was more serious and had a message in it which was something that we hadn't done before.

story's going to be. As you begin doing the actual programming, you get new ideas an things you want to do.

'Then when people begin playing it, you get suggestions. The more you see things that they try to do, the more you get additional ideas. So usually you start with the story and then it evolves over the whole design and implementation.'

All of Steve's games have had an exceptionally good reception from all sides of the press. When I asked him how he felt about this, he modestly answered from the point of view of the company. 'Well, we feel pretty good. I mean, each game takes pretty close to a year of work. After spending that amount of time on something, you feel pretty good when people like it.'

Fair enough. I asked him if working on *Sorcerer* created any problems as he was effectively in Dave Lebling's territory, here? 'Well, in some ways it was easier and in some ways it was harder. I was easier in that there wasn't so much independent thinking that I had to do because the game setting was already created. However, it was also harder because I didn't have as much flexibility but it was an interesting change from starting with my own universe.'

I wondered whether Steve had considered any preset objectives with this game. 'No not really. I just wanted to do a game that was very puzzle oriented. *Planetfall* certainly has its share of puzzles but it has much more in the storyline than *Sorcerer* did. I really wanted to try to do something that was almost entirely puzzle oriented. I think that the coal mine puzzle is the hardest part of *Sorcerer*.'

Sorcerer was one of the first Infocom games I had played. One of the best features which, as I learned later, was employed in all their games, was the use of considered, unpredictable responses to certain requests. I took the opportunity of asking Steve how these came about. 'Generally, the way they appear is playtesters play the games. They say, "I tried to do this and didn't get a response or a response which didn't make sense or just a default response which isn't good enough in this case." So you put in a special response for that case which is usually funny, if you can think of something funny, or is nasty if you happen to be in a bad mood when you write it. Or if it's a particularly annoying thing that the person tried to do. If it was a stupid thing to do, then you might be a little nastier in your response. Or if it was something that a smart Alec would try to do then you might be nasty as well. But yeah, those are where you really get a lot of opportunity to put humour into the game.'

Probably Steve's (and perhaps Infocom's) most famous game is their adaptation of *The Hitch Hikers Guide To The Galaxy*. Mr Meretzky talked a little about its origins. 'Well, most of the writers here were familiar with and enjoyed the books and the radio shows. Douglas Adams was familiar with and enjoyed some of our products, and so a mutual friend of Infocom's and Douglas's, introduced us and we hit it off pretty well. About a year after that, we started work on the *Hitch Hikers* game and I was basically chosen to do that because I was available at the time and I had done *Planetfall*, which was humourous science fiction.

'It started out with him coming over here and we worked together in Boston for about a week. Then we connected up a computer mail network and communicated pretty much on a daily basis that way. We talked on the phone once or twice a week and then about three months after that first meeting, I went over to England and spent a week there. After that the design was pretty much done and I was left alone to do all the testing and bug fixing type of work and then Douglas came over here for another week right before it went out, just to do some last minute polishing. Basically I did all the programming and he did most of the writing and we designed most of the puzzles working together.'

Steve's latest masterpiece is called *A Mind Forever Voyaging* but unlike their normal games, this one only runs on sixteen bit micros. 'There already is an Amiga version. All our games run on both of those two (ST and Amiga). *AMFV* is the first game in our new plus series. Basically we now have two lines of adventure games; the original line and the plus line which are much larger and won't run on the lower end machines but the plus games and the originals all run on the more powerful machines.'

Steve never seems to run short on ideas (then again, neither do the rest of the team). Certainly, *AMFV* seems to be one of the most original pieces of software to ever appear on a home computer. 'I think it's really hard to track down where the ideas came from. But one thing that made it possible was the system which allowed a lot more complexity and, you know, just a lot more time in the game. Without the Plus system it would have been impossible to have a bigger geography or as much text or anything like that. I also, when I was doing *AMFV*, I wanted to have a game which was more serious and had a message in it which was something that we hadn't done before. And as far as the individual or more specific ideas, they came about the way most come about; just sitting and thinking about it, talking with other people and rejecting ideas and developing the scenario.'

After all this hard work, had Steve considered one game in particular to be his favourite? 'That's really hard to say. I enjoyed all of them for different reasons. Probably *Planetfall* was the most fun because it was the first and so nothing was repetitious and it wasn't like anything I had ever done before.'

NEXT MONTH: Sean talks to **Stu Galley**, Senior Games Designer, and learns that there are no 'bosses' at Infocom; and to **Carl Genatossio**, Art designer, about Infocom's unusual packaging, including the famous flying saucers that kept falling off shop shelves.


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THE ICONS

When SHADOWFIRE originally appeared on the Spectrum and the CBM 64 about a year ago it caused quite a stir. In fact it showed that a strategy, adventure and arcade game could all be combined successfully. Now one year on Denton Designs' original hit has found its way on to the Amstrad.

Shadowfire is a totally original concept. When it first appeared it was the only game to use icons as a control method. *Shadowfire*, the game, is about the heroic do or die mission of a crack team of allied humans, aliens and cyborg mercenaries known collectively as the **Enigma Team** (see panel). The time is the distant future: the mission that The Emperor has elected these mercenaries to undertake pits them against the dastardly General Zoff.

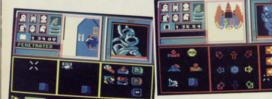
Zoff is in rebellion against the Empire. The mission itself starts with the Enigma Team taking off in their Enigmacraft, finding Zoff's heavily defended command ship (the Zoff V) and beaming aboard. Secured somewhere amongst the network of passages and rooms is the **Ambassador Kryxix**. Embedded in Kryxix's spine are the plans to a new space ship that can jump from planet to planet — a formidable weapon in the wrong hands and Zoff's hands are itching. The gist of your mission is to rescue Kryxix from the clutches of Zoff, capture the General himself and destroy the Zoff V in the process. Unfortunately Zoff is extremely good at interrogation and it will only be a matter of time before the plans are located (100 minutes to be exact).

The control system employed in *Shadowfire* is ingenious. Once you have selected either joystick or keyboard you have control over the main cursor. From then on all you have to do is point the cursor at an icon and press fire. There are numerous icons which, as you play the game, become familiar to you and consequently easy to use. To perform particular actions you may have to use a combination of icons. Should you wish to make Sevrina pick a lock you must first go to the **objects screen** then select the **activate icon** and then select the **tool kit**. If you are next to a locked door Sevrina will then start to pick the lock. Though this is daunting on first playing the game it is only a matter of time before you are combining various icons to make characters perform complex actions.

From the preview copy of the game showed to us, *Shadowfire* promises to be an interesting release, it certainly has the same addictive qualities of the original. Hopefully if it is completed soon there will be a full review next month. *Shadowfire* will be available from **Beyond** priced **£9.95**.

ROBIN CANDY

The character under control is Torik: top right block — graphic of Torik. Top left block — six character icons, shows the state of all members. Bottom left block — Torik's status icons showing strength, movement, stamina and weight carried (nothing presently). Bottom right block — control icons for changing control screens or exiting to main menu. Top centre — the map is presently inoperative.



Manto is selected for control. Here the centrally placed map screen is in use, showing the location of characters, enemies and objects.

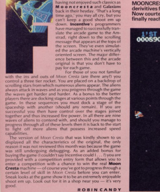
Sevrina is selected for control, her graphic appearing in the top right block. Lower left block shows all characters, objects present in Sevrina's location. The central block of icons are for eight-directional movement (possible movement highlighted). The right-hand block is for battle control, showing command icons to advance attacking, hold and defend and retreat firing. The TV screen icons are for changing to other control menus or exiting to main menu.

S OF SHADOWFIRE

The brave band consists of six members: Zark Montor, Sevrina Maris, Manto, Maul, Syylk and Torik. All of these beings have been chosen to undergo the mission because they possess special talents which you have to exploit during the game. For instance Sevrina is particularly good at cracking locks while Torik (a birdman) is a speedy mover. Maul, on the other hand, is very heavy and slow, but can carry huge weights easily. The Enigma Team leader is charismatic Zark, a man of many parts.

MOONCRESTA (A Trip to the Space War)

MOONCRESTA, the old arcade hit, has spawned many derivitives from the time of its release a few years ago. Now courtesy of INCENTIVE the arcade classic has finally reached the Amstrad.



Few arcade addicts can admit to having not enjoyed such classics as **Mooncresta** and **Galaxians** back in their heyday. 'That's a long time ago,' you may all cry, but you can't keep a good shoot em up down. **Incentive**'s programmers have managed to successfully translate the arcade game to the Amstrad, right down to the scrolling message that appears at the tops of the screen. They've even simulated the arcade machine's vertically oriented screen. The major difference between this and the arcade original is that you don't have to pay for each game.

For those of you not familiar with the ins and outs of *Moon Cresta* (are there any?) you control a three tier rocket. You are placed on a backdrop of scrolling stars from which numerous aliens appear. The aliens always attack in waves and as you progress through the game the waves get harder and harder. As a bonus to the better players there are docking stages at various points through the game. In these sequences you must dock a stage of the spaceship with another (should any remain). If you are successful you then have control over the stages joined together and thus increased fire power. In all there are nine waves of aliens to contend with, and should you manage to progress through all of these levels then it is back to the start to fight off more aliens that possess increased speed capabilities.

The version of *Moon Cresta* that was kindly shown to us displayed all the characteristics of the original, the only reason it was not reviewed this month was because the game was still undergoing debugging. As an added bonus for buying the game (I couldn't say Incentive could I . . . ?) you are provided with a competition entry form that allows you to enter a competition with a chance to win the real **Moon Cresta** machine — of course you've got to progress through a certain level of skill in *Moon Cresta* before you can enter. Sneak looks at the game show it to be an extremely enjoyable shoot em up. Look out for it in a shop near you — it's very good.

ROBIN CANDY



PREVIEW

Have you ever wanted to fly an Apache Advanced Attack Helicopter? Now thanks to Digital Integration you can at least fly a simulation. We take a look to see if TOMAHAWK can improve upon the standard set by DI's previous release, FIGHTER PILOT.

3D MILITARY MAYHEM!

Unlike **DI**'s last simulation, **Tomahawk** puts you at the controls of a hi-tech helicopter. For those of you lucky enough to have been in a helicopter you can appreciate that the control methods deployed are substantially different from those used in a jet fighter. For a start you have a vertical take off system instead of having to trundle down a runway — the place where most novices crash.

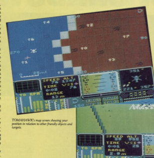
Similar to *Fighter Pilot*, *Tomahawk* features banks of instruments to be mastered. Unlike *Fighter Pilot* the bulk of the scenery is seen in realistic vector graphics. The game content of *Tomahawk* has been vastly improved upon — now you are pitted against tanks, anti-aircraft guns plus other helicopters all of which are drawn in wonderful vector graphics. The principal part of the game, though, is dedicated to simulating the Apache helicopter. As is to be expected you view the game from the pilot's eye view with the control panel situated just below the horizon window.

There is plenty of weaponry at your disposal (see panel) with which you can create havoc, although it needs to be wisely employed.

Though **Digital Integration**'s **Dave Marshall** (an experienced pilot as well as programmer) has packed a lot into the game, the main menu lets you almost completely redefine it. There are options for Cloudbase (and the height of it), Crosswinds and Turbulance, skill level and whether you own a green screen or not. Should you manage to master one level then a quick alteration on the menu screen can present you with a whole new challenge.

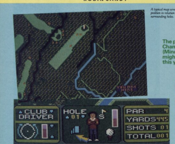
From the preproduction copy pictured here I can safely say that *Tomahawk* promises to be an outstanding release. Look out for a full review in next issue. *Tomahawk* will be available from Digital Integration priced £9.95

ROBIN CANDY



TOMAHAWK's map screen showing your position in relation to other friendly objects and targets.

A successful hit on a target causes it to explode over some distant mountains.



A typical map screen, showing your current position in relation to tee, fairway, green and surrounding holes.

The main screen. Icons: Top left — club selection (up range or down); bottom left — stroke direction (toggles left or right with cursor dot indicating selected direction), and next to it, strength of shot (up or down). Centre block, top left — hole selection (up or down); bottom left — access to map screen; top right — wind sock and wind strength; bottom right — activate icon. The main cursor is placed just below the map access icon.

PLAYING

The prize money for winning International Golf Championships is now colossal. Argus Press Software (Mind Games) are about to release a program that might help you to brusk up your stroke play in time for this year's British Open.

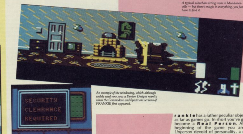
Golf simulations have a long history on home micros. Despite the physicality of the game itself, it lends itself well to the video screen, where the game can concentrate on the judgement required to read the landscape, wind direction, natural hazards, club selection and strength required to make a successful stroke. **Argus** have used the capabilities of the Amstrad remarkably well, to make **Nick Faldo Plays The Open** look like the best of the three versions and to make up for having had to wait so long for it to appear on the Amstrad after its Commodore and Spectrum releases last year.

To golfing enthusiasts, British golf champion Nick Faldo needs no introduction, but to putting tyros the course may. The version I was given to look at had no instructions with it, and still required much work in as much as areas of the course

n TOMAHAWK the ree types of weaponry at your disposal are: GUNS, these have a range of about 2000ft; ROCKETS, you have 38 of these; MISSILES, are laser guided but you don't have many. Each weapon has its own specific use, for instance the guns are used just in everyday combat. TOMAHAWK features some advanced flying and weapons systems, when it starts to get dark then you can switch to nightsights to give you infra red vision. In fact TOMAHAWK is probably the most sophisticated flight simulation yet to be released!

Frankie Goes To Hollywood, the pop group, catapulted to fame by ZTT and their notorious song RELAX, have had their own game for sometime now but it has taken eight months for it to appear on the Amstrad. We take a look to see if Frankie and OCEAN have got another number one on their hands.

WELCOME TO THE PLEASURE DOME



A typical suburban sitting room in Mundanesville — but there's magic in everything, you just have to find it.

An example of the windowing, which although widely used now, was a Denton Designs novelty when the Commodore and Spectrum versions of FRANKIE first appeared.

ON AN OPEN SANDWICH

were still graphically blank, however, it most respects it is an exact copy of the earlier versions, and for the sake of this preview I'll assume (risky business) that it is still based on last year's Open held at **Royal St George, Sandwich**. The documentation provided with the Speccy and Commodore versions explained the course and its hazards, detailing each of the 18 holes.

The screen display offers a series of cursor-driven icons in the lower half, with the top of the screen given over to a large close up plan of your current position on the course. The left-hand block of icons allow club selection, stroke direction and strength of shot. On the right, details of the hole are provided — the par, yards and the shots taken on the hole and in total. In the centre, dominated by a nice graphic of a golfer, is a wind sock showing wind direction, and a bar graph indicating the wind strength. An icon allows the player to change the selected hole, up or down, while another selects a large scale map showing you in relation to the tee, fairway and green. A final icon, a golf ball on a tee, is for activating the stroke, and when this is done, the golfer springs into animated life, swings at the ball, and you watch as it flies over the icons and off the screen. At this point the whole screen cuts to an aerial view as the golf ball sails through the air, growing larger and smaller in 3D according to its trajectory.

Nick Faldo's Open is the easiest to use golf simulation yet, and should provide fun for everyone, golfer and non-golfer alike. Watch out for the full review soon.

ROGER KEAN

F rankle has a rather peculiar objective as far as games go. In short you've got to become a **Real Person**. At the beginning of the game you are an *Unperson* devoid of personality, a mere shade of what is to be. Should you manage to become a real person then and only then will you be able to enter the forbidden rooms of the **Pleasure Dome**.

Of course the prestigious group aren't going to allow any old person or unperson into the Pleasure Dome so this is where your personality comes in. **Mundanesville** in which you live is not quite as dull as its outward appearance would leave you to believe, there's magic everywhere behind that TV screen, through the pictures on the wall, just beside the sofa. There is a whole new world waiting to be discovered. On exploring certain areas or just completing certain tasks such as feeding the cat you are awarded **pleasure points**. Your pleasure points are represented in four bars which symbolise the figures of the famous Frankie equation, certain tasks increase certain bars. Also scattered throughout the game are various sub-games which must be mastered if you are to complete the whole game — plus there is a **murder mystery** to solve! These games are numerous and various — one involves the construction of the ZTT logo while another has you saving Merseyside from marauding bombers. Completion of these games results in a boost for your ever growing ego.

The control method used in *Frankie* is quite unique. The entire game is played using the joystick or keyboard but only at certain times are you actually moving your character. When selecting objects to use you are provided with a menu containing graphic representations of the objects available, you then move a graphic hand over the object of your choice and press fire. The bulk of the game is played using a windowing system. Previous to the coming of *Frankie* this had never been used. When you perform certain actions small graphic windows appear which whisk you away to another screen should you happen to step into it.

Denton Designs have provided Ocean with an extraordinary game that captures the flavour of Frankie Goes to Hollywood, their songs and their ethos. Full review as soon as we get the production copy.

ROBIN CANDY

AMTIX! COMPETITION

Give a Cr
either an
courtesy f

Back in the good old days everyone used to respect their elders. Cheerful snowy haired old persons enjoyed the twilight years of life, content with the reassuring knowledge that their youngers would look after them. Sadly, this is not the state of affairs in the world today. After slogging away at a lifetime of toil oldsters are not able to retire with comfort, and have to seek out lowlife jobs to scrape together a few coppers to supplement the government's pitiful pension.

Such a person is Malcolm, our erstwhile Editor. After years of dedicated work at his place of employment, they chucked him out on his 65th birthday. AMTIX! Editorship was the only thing the labour exchange could provide and so the distinguished personage was sent to our employ to make his way among the rough and tumble world of software reviewing. Though a sturdy chap in his youth the years have taken their toll and

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Five 12 month AMTIX! subscriptions up for

HATS AND T SHIRTS for runners up

Raleigh's MILK RACE SPECIAL racing bike is a pretty impressive piece of machinery with Sachs-Huret gears, italienne handlebar and a close clearance racing geometry frame. Soon, a lucky AMTIX! reader will be cycling round on one of these bikes courtesy of Newsfield, the publishers of AMTIX!.

We're offering this bike, together with an AMTIX! T Shirt and an AMTIX! hat to keep the sun from beating down on the cranium while the winner is cycling round showing off his or her prize. Ten runners up will also receive AMTIX! T Shirts by way of consolation, and five AMTIX! readers won't have to buy a copy of their favourite magazine for a whole twelve months — we're giving away subscriptions too.

To enter this competition and stand a chance of cycling round in style, we want you to hunt thought the wordsquare that appears here and find as many names of AMTIX! writers and contributors as you can. Jot the names you find on a piece of paper, complete the entry form and whizz it off to AMTIX! CYCLING COMP, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB to arrive before 15th May and you could be pedalling round in style.

Don't forget to add your shirt size to the entry form as well as the size of frame you'd like your Milk Race Special bike to have if yours is the first all-correct entry out of the hat. Mark the number of AMTIX! type names you found in the wordsquare on the back of the envelope as well, please, to make the judging just that little bit easier. Go on, pretty please. It's not much to ask, seeing as we're giving away a bike, is it?





umbly Editor a hand and win Amstrad PCW 8256, or CPC 6128, of AMTIX!

the poor man is finding it hard to cope with the hyperactive young reviewing teenies that have been put into his charge. He needs a hand and this is where you come in.

AMTIX! is willing to give away an **Amstrad PCW8256** (better known as 'Joyce' or a **CPC6128** (depending on which you prefer) to the clever personage who can provide a design for some sort of gadget that will help the aged editor get the rest of the staff to do some work. For those not quite so lucky, or at least a dozen almost luckies, there are 12 lovely AMTIX! T-shirts to be picked up.

The main problem faced by poor old Malc is to steer the young people's interest away from playing their raucous punk music into the latest in Amstrad games. Not an easy task. What we need from you is a blueprint of your editor boosting device that will send all the AMTIX! staff scuttling of to their word processors to get some work done. Just get your editorial power enforcement kit drawings or models to **AMTIX!, HELP A CRUMBLY COMP, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB** by no later than the **15th of May**.

Please ensure that all your entries are no larger than A4 size (297mm x 210mm), although they can be of several pages if you wish. And don't forget to put your name and address, T-shirt size (S-M-L) and postcode clearly on the entry!

A JOYCE OR A 6128 WHICHEVER YOU APPRECIATE

AMTIX! COMPETITION



ENTRY FORM
AMTIX! CYCLING COMPETITION

M	U	M	M	Y	L	O	N	O	D	D	I	L
A	D	P	G	N	I	D	R	A	H	O	D	Y
S	R	O	G	E	R	O	B	E	R	T	S	D
T	M	F	R	S	S	G	G	O	L	B	Y	M
E	Z	T	R	I	Y	E	S	N	I	K	N	L
R	G	F	E	N	L	A	K	J	O	B	G	O
S	N	N	A	E	S	S	E	Y	D	N	A	C
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N	T	R	H	E	B	O	N	T	J	I	Y	M
W	W	K	V	A	X	H	I	J	F	S	C	U
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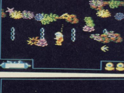
FRAME SIZE
(Circle One): 21 inch, 23 inch, 25 inch

STOP PRESS!
UK release: May '86!

PACIFIC I

At the last moment, hot from France comes this report and some pictures . . .







FROM ERE!

Ere Informatique is a French software house that is now releasing titles in this country through a back-to-back agreement with PSS *(as Julian Rignall reports in his piece on PSS this issue) and is currently following up its initial British debut of Macadam Bumper* with *Get Dexter* (reviewed this issue), *Doomsday Blues*, and *Contamination*. We were allowed a sneak preview of the game **Pacific** which is currently being readied for release in France, Germany and England under their new policy of developing games on the Amstrad in three languages.

The game is written by two French programmers, Philippe Biscay and Philippe Taupan. It's a one or two player game where you play an intrepid diver seeking the lost treasure of Atlantis. You descend through 1000 metres of sea, armed with only your air tank and an eight-cartridge pistol. As you move around the screens with the joystick, variously coloured denizens of the deep swim around you, beautiful but deadly and you must avoid their touch or lose one of your three lives. Coral forms lie beneath you and can hamper progress unless you can find a barrel of dynamite to blast through the unyielding rock by moving them to the desired position and shooting them with the pistol. They make quite a bang so you have to retire to a safe distance (the next screen is far enough) or die in the shockwave. Air pumps are found in some places but they don't always work and stuck to the rocks are touch sensitive mines — neutralised by shooting with the trusty pistol.

Your position can be determined by finding a sextant, touching it and pressing the fire button. You are highlighted by a flashing dot and the second player by a stationary red spot. Doors open to reveal vast underwater galleries where ammunition and a curious lamp can be found but booby traps protect them. If you can reach the lamp post then you've nearly reached your goal. What is it? Ahh that would be telling save to say that it's quite surprising and highly colourful.

A phone call to PSS revealed that there are no immediate plans for the game's release in the UK at this moment, but it shouldn't be long. So for now, feast your eyes on these lovely graphics (the best is the final screen, which we're not allowed to show). More as soon as PSS get us the details.

THE AMSTRAD ROAD SHOW VISITS MANCHESTER

The intrepid AMTIX! team pack their bags, fill up the boots of their cars, and drive up to Manchester to inspect the goings on at the third Amstrad User Show and the first one outside London. MALCOLM HARDING reports briefly on the chaotic week-end.

Advertisement manager, Roger Bennett, points to THE stand. Editor, Malcolm Harding, is obviously deep in thought.

It only seems a matter of days since my colleagues were dragging themselves back from the Novotel in London yet here we are a couple of months later risking life and limb to bravely go where no sane person would go. Anyway nothing ventured and all that so off we went, our rucksacks brimming over with freshly printed AMTIX! magazines and our super new binders to adorn stand 40/42.

Once again there was a distinct lack of software companies but one or two did turn up including Design Design who, of course, only had to stumble down the street from their penthouse suite to show off their latest games *2112AD* and *Forbidden Planet* both on disk and each costing £14.95. Simon Jackson had his laser on display and it certainly helped attract the punters.

Mikro-Gen were their usual hospitable selves and were having a ball with their National Computer Games Championships heat with Amsters vying for the highest score on *Battle of the Planets*. Ian Andrew of **Incentive** gave me a *Moon Cresta* T-shirt and of course a preview copy of the new game of the same name. Also on display at the stand was their very successful *Graphic Adventure Creator*, which was on display with two new classic adventures *Winter Wonderland* and *Mountains of Ket*.

With most of the games producers absent it was hardly surprising the show was dominated by the small hardware and software manufacturers. Briefly I shall run through the various stands but in no particular order or preference.

IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY OF HARDWARE

DK'Tronics had their usual impressive display of hardware and at times you could hardly see their stand as North West Amsters made the most of the opportunity. **Screens Distribution** were again showing off their West German 512K RAM expansion boards and 1.4 mbyte disk stations for the CPC464. They were also launching their own 80 column word processor under their **Screensoft** label entitled *Screenscript*. A North Wales based company, **Sandpiper Software** from Wrexham in Clwyd were showing off their *Sandpipe Accounts*, a simplified integrated accounting system specially written for the PCW8256 and also the *Sandpiper Payroll* an equally simplified integrated payroll system for Joyce which could accomodate 100 employees per data disk, seven overtime rates, 13 pre and post tax deductions and was compatible with SSP, tax and National Insurance.

Newstar and **Hisoft's Software Toolshop** had their latest catalogue and their usual range of CP/M applications software and were showing *Starcom* for the first time. It is a full function electronic mail and Prestel system for use with the Joyce. **Hisoft's Software Toolshop** unveiled their extensive range of language and utility products. **Harlow Computer Centre** travelled north from Essex to make available a vast selection of Amstrad products while **Vulcan Electronics Ltd** were showing their Gunshot joystick and the new Kraft Micro-Switch joystick which allows precise finger-tip control and high performance.

STEREO SOUND AMPLIFIER

Vanguard Leisure Limited of Preston showed off their new stereo sound amplifier, the *Maestro*. The package consists of an amplifier, two speakers and a headphone and also a demonstration cassette. Another company, **FMP Business Software** of Torquay were selling their *Integrated Software Package* which consists of Wordmate, Datamate, Mailmate, Bilmate and Bankmate. **Beebugsoft** were demonstrating their new range of programs for the 464, 664 and 6128 machines including *Toolkit*, *Rembrandt*, *Ultrabase* and *Locksmith*. A new range of low-priced *Pixel* pens could be seen on **Electric Studio**'s stand, along with their *Music Box*, a light pen controlled music system.

Caxton Software were unfolding their enhanced spreadsheet for the Joyce. Called *Scratchpad Plus* it boasts an on-line help facility and a step by step tutorial. **Cornix Software** specialise in hard-working software for use in the small business environment and they featured their book-keeping program *Simple Accounts* which is available for all Amstrad machines and the latest program *Microfile*. On the **Connect Systems** stand they were boasting of **Money Manager**, a flexible financial management system for personal and small business use.

KDS Electronics had a vast array of hardware on display including the RS232 serial interface, 8 bit printer port, twin 8 bit parallel port, sideways ROM board, power controller and Communicator 104 modem with full 8 colour Prestel and downloader for the Joyce. On the **Cirkit** stand visitors had the chance to enter the world of data communications with their low cost **Cirkit** Prestel link for the CPC series of Amstrads. **LCL Educational Software** unveiled *Micro English*, a program which includes real speech! The phen-

Friends from the Amstrad North West User Club.



Mikrogen made the maximum use of our magazine as visitors took part in their national computer games championship heat.

omenal sales of the CPC 8256 was evident by the amount of serious software on sale for it and **Compact Software Limited** ensured they did not miss the boat by selling their *Nucleus* program generator package for Joyce. **Cambrian Software** were displaying their *Camsoft* range of professional business software which transforms the 8256 from a word processor to a powerful business computer capable of processing all of a company's accounting functions.

LOADS OF UTILITIES

Siren Software were enticing the punter with a range of Amstrad utilities including *Master Disk* their complete disk utility package, fast formatter, sector editor, etc, their *Discovery* tape to disk copier, *Diskon* a headerless tape to disk manipulator, and *Tape Utility*. A new database product, *DataGem*, was launched by **Gemini Marketing Ltd** at the show. They were also launching their **Office Mate** and **Office Master** range for the 464, 664, and 6128 machines. **Quest Business Software** were demonstrating *Cash Trader* together with the *Micro Pro* range of word processing, database and spreadsheet software. **Pace Micro Technology** have been producing communications hardware and software for over two years now and they now boast the Nightingale multi baud rate approved modem, a powerful RS232 serial interface and a comprehensive Viewdata and Terminal software.

Grafsales Ltd presented what they claim to be the only known graphics-cum-digitiser pad for the Amstrad range of micros, their Icon software on disk or cassette providing the ability to perform simple or complex drawings or tracings through paper thickness as well as directly onto the *Grafpad*. Gosforth based **Sagesoft PLC** showed off a full range of *SAGE* business software while **Arnor Ltd**, the pioneers of ROM based software for the Amstrad, were selling the well known *Protext* word processor with new additions including Promerge Plus, a comprehensive mailmerge package, and Prospell, a super fast spelling checker. **Tasman** displayed a cross selection of its range of software including *Tasword 6128* and *Tas-Spell*. **Micro Power** launched its new version of the SuperPower Sideways ROM Card for the 464, 664 and 6128 and also its SuperPower assembler, disassembler, machine code monitor. **Northern Computers** of Frodsham exhibited the Amstrad network with 100 megabytes of hard disk storage on-line.

Every show has to have its exclusive, and **Dart Electronics** provided it by taking the wraps off what they claim to be the 'world's first fibre optic, true high resolution pen'. It'll be interesting to see what that's like in practice.

It was nice to see my mates from the Amstrad North West User Club. Their stand appeared to attract a lot of interest and I hope they gain increased membership from the PR exercise. Several publishing companies were evident including **Phoenix Publishing** while **Bourne Educational Software** were offering a full range of interesting educational software.

That, in a nutshell, is the lowdown on the first Manchester Amstrad User Show. I'm sure it will be the first of many in the North. The AMTIX! team can now spend some time recuperating since the next show, at London's Novotel, is being held for three days in mid-June, from June 13 to 15 inclusive.

Oh, one snippet of information which is sure to embarrass certain hotels in Manchester. Visitors to the show on Sunday may have thought some of the stand staff looked a little the worse for wear from an over-indulgence of alcohol on the previous night. That is probably true but a number of them also managed to lose an hour's valuable sleeping time because certain hotel management decided to start British Summer Time a week early and put their clocks on an hour! Consequently their early morning call really was early. Thank God I didn't ask for a phone call to wake me up!

TAU CETI TO BE EXTENDED

CRL say they are bringing out an extended version of their AMTIX! Accoladed game *Tau Ceti* in the very near future on disk. It will have double the playing area, five extra objects flying around, loads of outposts, time vaults and special missiles to name but a few new goodies.

ARIOLASOFT'S BIG BYTES

Ariolasoft UK Ltd has released two games on Amstrad cassette. For regal power *Kaiser* (£7.95) is the game. The player is the ruler of a small German province in 1700 and manages crops and estates and lays down economic and social laws. The other game, *Panzadrome*, (£8.95) is an explosive and futuristic wargame. The mission is to destroy an island inhabited solely by robot tanks.

SPLIT WITHIN ELECTRONIC PENCIL

There has been a split within the **Electronic Pencil Company**, the independent programming team, while working on *Zoids* for **Martech**. Rupert Bowater and Paul Norris have announced the formation of a new programming team to be called **Binary Vision**.

Said Rupert 'This was an amicable parting and we are happy with the way things went with EPC. we are now working on a new project for **Palace Software** which should be ready for the PCW Show in September. It is as yet untitled but can best be described as a tropical escapade set between the first and second world wars.'

INCENTIVE'S GAC PLUS

Incentive Software, who are riding on the crest of a wave thanks to the success of their *Graphic Adventure Creator*, have revealed advance news of their *GAC Plus*. The new program will be available for all Amstrads on disk and there wil be a host of additional features, including a music editor, scaled and offset merging, thousands of different shading patters, mouse compatibility, and more.

The most significant addition, however, is a disk access facility. This enables the user to create adventures in excess of 150K. *GAC Plus* will be available in June or July when **Incentive** will be offering an exchange service to the GAC users wishing to upgrade.

FLEET STREET EDITOR FOR 8256 AND 6128

Mirrorsoft are to launch two new versions of *Fleet Street Editor*, its fast selling entry level personal publishing package, towards the end of May. The two versions will be for the PCW 8256 and for the CPC6128. Prices of both are expected to be in the region of £50. Watch this magazine for further news!

CHESS GAME TAKES ON EUROPE

CDS have licenced their *Colossus Chess 4* Amstrad game to **Micropool International** thus giving them simultaneous release throughout Europe. In the UK the program is available from leading distributors or direct from **CDS Software Limited**. It costs £9.95 on cassette and £13.95 on disk and was written by Martin Bryant.



TIME WARP TIME AGAIN

CRL has announced the release of further extended and enhanced versions of *The Rocky Horror Show* including one on disk for the Amstrad. It sells at £14.95.

THEY SOLD A MILLION II

Ocean are releasing another compilation, *They Sold a Million II*. It will contain **US Gold**'s *Bruce Lee*, **Ocean**'s *Match Day*, **Psion**'s *Match Point*, and **Ultimate**'s *Knight Lore*. The cassette version will sell for £9.95 while the disk will cost another fiver.

£500,000 GOES BEGGING

The managing director of a leading micro supply company has half a million pounds to spend but as yet nothing to spend it on. **Barry Kryte**, boss of **DataStar Systems**, wants to invest the money in more new producers but none seem to be available.

'I am prepared to invest money in products which may be gathering dust on someone's shelf, just waiting to have their potential realised,' he said. 'I could also be interested in products which may still be at the design stage.'

DataStar Systems are the manufacturers of the **Magic Modem**. It was this project which proved to the company how easy it was for even an exceptional product to flounder without sufficient capital behind it. 'We are cost conscious like everyone else and do not intend to waste money but on the other hand we are prepared to take chances if the product appears to be good enough. I do not want to see potentially good products being forgotten or good ideas going to waste and I am prepared to spend money to stop that happening,' he explained.

GIRLS AND COMPUTERS

Mikro-Gen would like to hear from any female readers of AMTIX! if they can suggest topics for computer games that will capture the imagination of the feminine aspect of the home computer market.

The company has noticed only a small handful of females in the United Kingdom seem to show interest in this area, and **Mikro-Gen** feel if the games were to be female orientated then the overall outlook of the home computer market would have to change to include the female population.

Any ideas can be sent to the company through AMTIX! We promise to send them on!

SWORDS AND SORCERY

PSS has announced the release of its acclaimed *Swords and Sorcery* for the Amstrad. Designed around the Dungeons & Dragons concept, it is a role playing graphic adventure which uses the MIDAS system. It differs from other adventures in that you guide your character through the neverending corridors of the underworld on a quest for material, physical and/or spiritual power. The choice is yours.

Within the structure of the game lies a complex set of quests. You begin the adventure as a novice with limited abilities in the use of sword play, magic, and stealth, and develop your own character as you progress. Apparently a series of expansion modules are planned so your characters can be transferred to future adventures and new opponents, scenarios, and objects can be added to all the games.

SHOGUN IS COMING

Anyone who watched *Shogun* on television last year will be interested to know that **Virgin Games** have almost finished the game of the same name for the Amstrad. Our spy at Virgin tells us the game should be on sale next month.

The game's aim game is quite simply to become a Shogun. There is a choice of characters at the beginning and you bave to recruit 20 followers and eventually take over the existing Shogun's place. There are 40 different characters in the game. Sounds good. Watch this magazine for more news.

SAM FOX STRIP POKER GAME

Martech has announced that versions of *Sam Fox Strip Poker /International Seven Card Stud* will be released soon for the Amstrad 464, 664 and 6128 machines on cassette and disk.

A spokesman for **Martech** said they had been knocked out by the response from the public. 'We did not realise how popular Samantha Fox was,' he said with surprising naiivety, 'and it is this response which has prompted us to release so many versions of the game.'

The tape versions of the game will sell for £8.95 while on disk it's £13.95.

Apart from the bolt on goodies offered by sexy Sam, the poker game itself is claimed to be very smart indeed, featuring a fair smattering of artificial intelligence of the sort Sam herself displays on breakfast TV, and some cunning programming techniques. You're up against three poker players in the *Seven Card Stud* version on one side of the cassette and each of them has his own personality, playing preference and bluff factor. They can even 'remember' your style of play which should add to the challenge.

The other side of the cassette, featuring busty Sam, presents a very different challenge indeed! However, **Martech** claim she is no push over and a fair bit of card playing skill will be needed before her clothes start littering the bottom of your Amstrad screen and Sam reveals her two greatest assets.

BAT MAN FLIES IN

Our spy at **Ocean** has sent these two screen shots from their new game *Bat Man* which will sell at £8.95. Over to you Robin!

3-D CLOCK CHESS FOR PCW8256

CP Software have released a chess program for the Amstrad PCW8256. Called *3-D Clock Chess* it is claimed by the company to be the fastest, strongest and most exciting chess game yet on the market and to contain every possible feature including unique 'Play against the Clock' for tournament realism. It sells for £19.95.

NEWS

TONY RETURNS TO ALLIGATA

Tony Crowther, has signed an exclusive contract with **Alligata Software Limited** to return to them as a full time games programmer. Director, Mike Mahony said he was confident Tony would produce some exciting releases in the near future.

STILL HAZY ABOUT DATA PROTECTION?

A recent survey, carried out by the Central Office of Information on behalf of the Data Protection Registrar, shows a large number of organisations interviewed have not yet appreciated the Data Protection Act 1984 applies to them. This is in spite of the Registrar's publicity campaign, helped by extensive media coverage, achieving its objective of ensuring most organisations are aware of the Act and the need for most data users to register.

Of those organisations carrying out operations covered by the Act over three-quarters of smaller organisations (under 50 staff) and 96% of larger organisations appear to be aware of the Act and its implications. However, only 44% of the smaller companies, and 58 per cent of the larger organisations acknowledge the Act does apply to them.

Registrar, Eric Howe, believes the apparent anomaly points to a fundamental misunderstanding on the part of many data users. 'The exemptions are being misinterpreted. Many data users do not appreciate the exemptions are likely to apply in very few cases,' he said. 'Better informed organisations I have been meeting recently have said that, having studied the implications carefully, they have come to the conclusion it is easier to register and comply with the Act than to meet the stringent conditions needed for exemption.'

The survey also showed a majority of both smaller and larger organisations agreed the Data Protection Act protects the interests of ordinary people.

Details of organisations already registered under the Act are now available for public viewing. At present it is only available for examination at Springfield House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, but from August onwards it will be available at libraries throughout the United Kingdom.

Companies, who have to register, must have applied to do so by May 11 of this year. Anyone wanting a registration pack can obtain one from a post office or ring the registrar's office on 0625-535777. The register shows the organisations registered, the type of information they hold - about individuals, for what purpose, where it is obtained, to whom it will be disclosed, and the countries outside the UK to which it may be transferred. It also shows the address from which members of the public will be able to seek details of the information held about themselves after November 11 this year.

FIRST LOOK AT NEXUS

The first game from **Nexus**, is an arcade adventure set in the headquarters complex of an evil drugs ring. Called *Nexus* the player's aim is to survive long enough to gather vital evidence which may be used to smash the drugs barons.

Nexus will be played through the joystick with the character able to walk, run, jump, kick, punch, duck, hurl grenades and daggers as well as fire pistols and sub machine guns. New skills, and therefore rules of play, will be introduced through practice screens and the player can remain in practice until he has mastered a new skill.

Nexus (the outfit) has been going for some time, working on the game, but was recently expanded by the addition of ex-Beyond men, Clive Bailey and Bill Delaney.

AMTIX! USER CLUB NEWS

Welcome to the regular column for user clubs and bulletin boards. The aim of the page is to allow the aforementioned to have printed space to write about themselves, offer advice and help to newly formed or planned organisations, notify others of any rip offs, and generally have the opportunity to sound off about anything and everything.

AMTIX! wants to hear from user clubs the length and breadth of Britain and indeed we would welcome correspondence from organisations abroad. Write and tells us how, why and when you set up the club, its aims, when and where it meets, how many members you have, any special events you have planned for the coming year, if you publish a newsletter, and if so how frequently it appears. Got the idea? Then get writing straight away.

By Malcolm Harding

In this issue we are travelling north to once again to feature the glorious city of Manchester. This time it is the turn of the city's North West Users Club to come under my scrutiny.

ANWUC, as it is commonly known, was formed in April last year because of a general lack of clubs and meetings for Amstrad owners in the Manchester area. Secretary, Paul Clarke, wrote to an Amstrad magazine and his letter led to a deluge of enquiries from Amster owners. Many of the replies came from abroad and this surprised the club for they did not realise there was so much interest in the computer in other countries.

Since then ANWUC has affiliated to many European clubs and consequently their membership has increased dramatically. In fact the workload on their photocopying machine has been such that it has recently 'died a death' and they are now on the look out for a second hand machine to buy.

President, Clint Heyliger; treasurer, Dave Boucher; and Paul had been computer buffs for some time before forming the club, having spent time working on the ZX81 and Spectrum machines before, in their own words, going on to 'better things', that is the Amstrad 464. When they decided to form the club they managed to bribe some friends into buying an Amster before the club came into being.

Since then the club has grown in leaps and bounds and several software companies have joined the club, including Design Design, Siren Software and Vortex. The club boasts some exceptional programmers and super boffins, including Andy Coles, their own super programmer; telecommunications genius, Barry Pickles; and electro computer wizard, Mark Lee (BSc Hon), who stays locked away in his tower and only comes out when the moon is bright!

The club boasts a monthly newsletter which contains lots of information about games, utilities and so on, as well as local advertisements from computer shops that give discount for club members. A pat on the back to such people as Budget Software, Vu-Data, Colombus Software and Computer World. The club's membership fee is £5 a year and it meets every Wednesday night at the Ellen Wilkinson High School with an admission charge of 50p which includes tea and coffee for all who attend. They do have quite a lot of young women members but they would welcome more so if you are a female amster and you live in Manchester why not go along? You would be most welcome! Meetings take place between 7 p m and 9 p m and members can use a Dot Matrix and Daisy Wheel printer.

One of the club's main ambitions is to reach the magical membership figure of 1,000 and they have something special in mind when it happens! They also intend to do something a bit special for the person, whoever he or she may be! Their other main ambition is to go truly international. At present the club has almost 800 members who live in nine countries. By the time you read this it is highly likely the club will have set up a telephone service with the use of a modem and answering machine so all members can call in.

Asked to list the main aims of the club the trio said they were to provide an organised centre; to provide the means whereby users can share knowledge; to encourage communications

between club users; to help members solve problems through help from each other; to help Amstrad owners understand their machines more fully; to provide unbiaised reviews of hardware and software products; to provide an opportunity for members to air their ideas and views in the monthly magazines, Arnold and Arnold International; to offer members the chance to earn money writing original programmes and to try and offer discount at local shops and stores to members on the club's behalf.

USER GROUPS MERGE

The Advantage Computer User Group is acquiring Amsclub Computer Club and in doing so it ensures Advantage is now the world's largest independent user group for the entire range of Amstrad computers.

Amsclub, which came in for criticism in last month's issue, was started in November 1984 by David Baxter and has provided a service to its members offering a regular newsletter and tape magazine plus offers on commercial software.

Advantage, which is based in Chinnor, Oxfordshire, was formed in May last year by Jeffrey Green and provides a monthly newsletter plus discounts on software available from the company's fast growing database. This includes packages of free Public Domain CP/M programs which have been tested on the Amstrad range, documented and supported by the group.

The take-over is amicable as David Baxter wishes to pursue his other interests in computing and software. He is happy Advantage will provide the right support for Amsclub members. All existing Amsclub members will become Advantage members and will be notified in due course. All correspondence for Amsclub should be addressed to Advantage, 33 Malyns Close, Chinnor, Oxfordshire.

AMULET COMPUTER CONTACT ASSOCIATION

If you live in the Sheffield area there is an International Computer Contact Association for Amstrad users on your doorstep. AMULET was formed to promote Amstrad machines and to assist, in whatever way possible, owners/users/operators/programmers and small firms using Amstrads at work.

President of the club, Carl Stevenson, said the club had several major aims. They included contact with users of Amstrads with a view to helping them program, find the right software and hardware for their needs; a comprehensive fault finding service—members sent in details of problems and the club answered them by return of post; the club's personal review of hardware, software, books and magazines; and write customised software for certain users who are undertaking a different interest to the mass market (fees are open to offer).

The club also writes its own guides and documentation for users of certain products (with the approval of the manufacturers of course) and provides a link between software houses, manufacturers, and publisher retailers to find out the products users want to buy.

Carl said all club reviews were undertaken by members who had bought the piece of software out of their own pocket, unless the item, was highly priced in which case they went down on bended knee to try and borrow the item. The club also produced a newsletter which featured letters and articles written by members or himself, spelling and CPC machines and printers permitting. The club's main ambition, he said, was to provide a service to users, software houses, and publishers that was second to none, fast, friendly and above all efficient.

'I bought an Amstrad 464 within weeks of their arrival on the market and at the time the firm I worked for sold anything but Amstrads. They laughed at the time but they're not laughing now,' he said. The Association welcomes members and correspondence from anyone anywhere, be it home or abroad. Membership is £5 a year per household or firm. AMULET would like to hear from anyone who sells an Amstrad product, that is any high street retailer so a directory can be compiled listing everyone of them!

On a final note Carl said the association could help with problems associated with machine code, playing games, Pascal, Cobol, Logo, and serious software. If you want further details about AMULET Carl's address is 682 Wordsworth Avenue, Sheffield S5 9JJ, telephone 0742 466412.

SEEKING A USER CLUB

This month I am looking for a user club in the Strathclyde area of Scotland. Graeme Taylor has written to me asking for help in finding one so he can exchange games, tips and general information. His address is 29 Deneron Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow.

That appears to be it for another month. Keep the news coming in to me and if you have any photographs send them in as well but please ensure they are 35mm black and white pictures or negatives. The address, as usual, is AMTIX! USER CLUB PAGE, PO BOX 10, KING STREET, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.


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Screenshots from Spectrum 48K

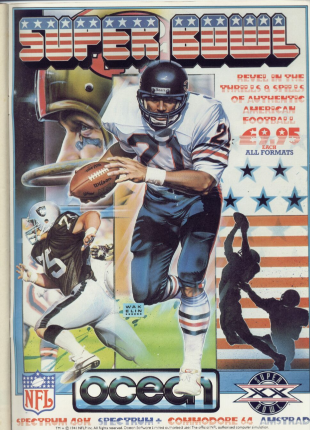

UPDATE:
Cross had struck a bargain to deliver a working space vessel to Vilgarre. If he failed, Vilgarre would kill the surviving passengers of Cross's ship, if he succeeded, Vilgarre would take the ship and kill everyone anyway – not exactly a rosy future. The present was pretty bad too – finding a ship on a decadent world of a decaying Dyson System made needles in haystacks look very easy...
THE TERMINAL MAN
THE QUEST TOOK CROSS, MANDRELL AND JIN KIMAS INTO THE 'BURNING LAND' REGION...
WELL-NAMED SORT OF WASTELAND, CROSS– WHAT'S CAUSING THE PRETTY LIGHTS?
RESIDUAL RADIATION – SOMETHING VERY BIG AND VERY NUCLEAR BLEW UP HERE ABOUT 500 YEARS AGO...
WONDERFUL! SO WE WANDER AROUND LOOKING FOR A SHIP THAT DOESN'T EXIST – GIVING OURSELVES TERMINAL RADIATION CANCER!
THE RADIATION IS HARMLESS – AND WE ARE LOOKING FOR FUEL CELLS, BY THE WAY–
–VILGARRE ALREADY HAS THE SHIP – BUT ONLY I KNOW WHERE IT IS.
WHAT!? BUT WHERE...?
I WILL TELL YOU IF YOU NEED TO KNOW. WE MUST MOVE ON...
WAIT, CROSS...
SOMEONE OR SOMETHING'S BEHIND US – I CAN'T SEE OR HEAR IT BUT...
I AM SCANNING ALL WAVELENGTHS I CAN HANDLE EVERY FIVE MINUTES – THERE IS NO LIVING THING WITHIN FIVE KILOMETRES...
IT MAY NOT BE ALIVE – BUT IT'S THERE – KEEPING ITS DISTANCE...
TELL ME IF IT GETS CLOSER. WE MUST REACH THE SOURCE OF RADIATION. FIND THAT – AND WE FIND THE FUEL...


BY MORNING THEY WERE CLOSER TO THEIR GOAL... ALTHOUGH IT DIDN'T FEEL LIKE IT—NOT WHEN THEY SAW THE GORGE...
THIS CAN'T BE REAL! WHAT LUNATIC WOULD GO AND DIG A HOLE LIKE THAT?!
IT WASN'T DUG, MANDRELL—IT HAPPENED. THE WORLDS OF A DYSON SPHERE MUST BE BALANCED WHEN THE SPHERE IS ASSEMBLED...
—OTHERWISE THEIR CONFLICTING GRAVITIES START TO RIP THEM APART. THIS WORLD'S ORBIT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ADJUSTED CENTURIES AGO...
BUT SINCE THE RACE WHICH CONSTRUCTED THIS SYSTEM LEFT, THE WHOLE THING'S SLOWLY COLLAPSING—THE PLANETARY CRUST IS SPLIT TO THE CORE. YOU CAN SEE THE LAVA BELOW...
GREAT! BUT IT MUST BE TWENTY KLICKS DEEP! HOW DO WE GET OVER?
WE WALK: DOWN ONE SIDE AND UP THE OTHER.
BUT IT'LL TAKE WEEKS! WE CAN'T!
YOU SURPRISE ME, MANDRELL. I THOUGHT YOU WERE A GAMBLER! WE TAKE A CHANCE THAT WE FIND A WAY ACROSS PART WAY DOWN...
I'D PUT THAT AT ABOUT FIVE-TO-ONE AGAINST.
CLOSE. ACTUALLY IT'S FOUR-TO-ONE PLUS OR MINUS FIVE PERCENT.
STORY BY KELVIN GOSNELL©
DRAWN BY OLIVER FREY©


HOURS LATER, THE DESCENT LED TO A WIDE LEDGE, ONE KILOMETRE BELOW THE RIM...
CROSS, IS THAT A SETTLEMENT ON THE WALL? DOWN WHERE THOSE BIRDS ARE FLYING?
YES, IT IS A SETTLEMENT, BUT THOSE ARE NOT BIRDS...
THEY'RE INHABITANTS! RIDING THE CONSTANT UPDRAUGHT FROM THE LAVA — THE MOST NATURAL FORM OF TRANSPORT. HUMAN INGENUITY NEVER CEASES TO AMAZE ME...
I'D WORRY MORE ABOUT HUMAN AGGRESSION IF I WERE YOU — THEY ARE NOT FRIENDLY!
NATURALLY — WE ARE ABOVE THEM THEREFORE WE ARE A THREAT — IT'S THE FIRST RULE OF AERIAL COMBAT
— AND SINCE SOME ARE STILL BELOW US...
WE CONTROL THE GAME!
CROSS' METABOLISM WAS A BIZARRE MIXTURE OF HUMAN, COMPUTER AND VIRUS; THE COMPUTER PART OF HIM JUDGED ANGLES, RATES OF DESCENT AND...
URGH?!
ARRGH!
AIEEEEAAA
— HIS COMPUTER HAD ONCE CONTROLLED AN INTERSTELLAR LINER —
NO-OOOOO!
— HANDLING A PRIMITIVE SAILWING IN COMBAT CAME EASY — AND DEADLY!



Next: The Blind Death...


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CONTRAPTION!
IT'S OH SO VERY WaCkY!
"THE GRAPHICS SEEM TO ME JUST ABOUT THE PRETTIEST I'VE EVER SEEN ON THE AMSTRAD"
AMSTRAD ACTION
I SAY, PRIGLEY, HAVE YOU HEARD WHAT AMTIX! SAID ABOUT THAT SUPER GAME, CONTRAPTION?
YES, RATHER, BUTTOXLEY! THEY SAID......
"This wacky platform and ladders game is really great fun. The graphics are really amazing and look brilliant in colour. The game itself is just a sort of Manic Miner clone but is brilliant fun to play. The time limit make things hard but the challenge just gets the adrenalin flowing and makes it all the more enjoyable. Contraption is a truly brilliant game that I can recommend to anyone."
...SO I BOUGHT IT! LETS WHIZZ BACK TO THE DORM AND GET OUR JOYSTICKS OUT!
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